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The Doctrine and Covenants Made Harder: Scripture Study Questions

James E. Faulconer

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THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER



THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER

SCRIPTURE STUDY QUESTIONS

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THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER
Scripture Study Questions

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Wherever you look about you, in literature and life, you see the celebrated names and figures, the precious and much heralded men who are coming into prominence and are much talked about, the many benefactors of the age who know how to benefit mankind by making life easier and easier, some by railways, others by omnibuses and steamboats, others by the telegraph, others by easily apprehended compendiums and short recitals of everything worth knowing, and finally the true benefactors of the age who make spiritual existence in virtue of thought easier and easier. . . . You must do something, but inasmuch as with your limited capacities it will be impossible to make anything easier than it has become, you must, with the same humanitarian enthusiasm as the others, undertake to make something harder.

JOHANNES CLIMACUS
Concluding Unscientific Postscript



Introduction

FOR SOME OF US scripture study is difficult because the scriptures are too easy. I sometimes hear people say things like “I’ve read it several times. I know what it says, so I don’t get anything new out of it.” Those are people for whom the scriptures have become too easy. I hope this book will help remedy that problem. Perhaps it will also help those who are only beginning to take scripture study seriously keep their scripture study fresh and educating.

To those ends, this is a book of questions. Just questions, no answers, though occasionally I will throw in some answer-like material to help make the question easier to understand. It is a book of questions because in my experience—in both personal scripture study and in teaching Sunday School and other lessons—questions are of more help for reflective, deep study. We learn new things when we respond to new questions, and the person who says “I no longer get anything out of my scripture study” no longer runs up against questions to think about as he or she reads. This book is intended to make reading harder—and therefore fresher—by giving such readers questions for study.

Sometimes when we study we may ask questions to which we can give answers based on research of some sort. Often, however, we learn the most when our questions are of a different sort, ones that don’t require specific answers as much as they require application. They cause us to reflect

on our lives and our associations with others. They make us consider whether we continue to live the covenants we have made. They help us ask once again what repentance means in *our* particular lives, what it requires us to do as individuals or as a people. You'll find here questions of all kinds (though none, I think, that require research), but I have hoped to focus mostly on questions to which you can return more than once, questions that will help you, as I believe they have helped me, "liken all scriptures unto us" (1 Nephi 19:23).

I understand Nephi's phrase to mean that I will find the scriptures call me to faith in Jesus Christ and to repentance. In Alma's words, they call me to receive Christ's image in my countenance (Alma 5:14) and to continue "to sing the song of redeeming love" (Alma 5:26). As I study the scriptures prayerfully and thoughtfully, they call me in the same way that they called those who first heard their revelations, sermons, stories, songs, and poems.

So perhaps the most important reason for focusing on questions when we study, either privately or in preparing for a lesson, is that questions about scripture help us think and ponder. They give us material to consider and ideas to contemplate. Questions help us to existentially hear again the divine call to come to Jesus Christ.

In contrast, when we focus on answers rather than questions, we tend to see scripture study as something that we can be over-and-done-with rather than as an ongoing process. Feeling that I know the answer tends to make me feel that there is nothing left to do. But focusing on questions helps me come back to passages fresh,

ready to learn new things as I read rather than returning to them with an implicit attitude of “I already know what this is about.”

A good example may be Doctrine and Covenants 121:43. The previous verses tell us that we can only use priesthood power through persuasion and love, “reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost.” Many in the Church have read verse 43 to tell us that *sometimes* we should reprove with sharpness, assuming that they knew the meaning of the word *betimes*. Had they approached reading this verse with questions, they might have asked themselves “Do I know what that word means?” and then checked a dictionary, where they would have discovered that it means “early.” Using that newly understood meaning, such a reader might well go back to Doctrine and Covenants 121:41–43 and rethink his or her understanding of those verses—as well his or her relations to others.

I hope that those who use this book will find that as they do they have questions of their own to add to mine. Obviously there is no exhaustive list of all the possible questions about the Doctrine and Covenants. I have written down the questions that have come to me as I read that scripture. As a result, for some sections and verses I have detailed questions. For others, I have only a question or two.

That doesn’t mean that the sections or verses for which I have more questions are more important than those for which I have fewer. Were I to write this book again, I would revise the questions I have already asked and add new ones. I would almost certainly focus on different chapters, and

I would surely expand or contract some of my previous questions. My questions change each time I go through the scriptures anew.

So, as you read the Doctrine and Covenants, think of this book as a starter for study. Keep a notebook of your own questions and the reflections and ideas that my questions and yours inspire, and return to your notebook the next time you study the same passage, adding new questions and new insights. I believe that as you do this, you will find your appreciation and love for the scriptures growing. I also believe that there is no better method for learning what the scriptures have to teach us. They do not say the same thing to every person every time or even to the same person every time.

Most who study the scriptures have had the experience of reading a familiar passage but reading it as if for the first time, seeing something in it that we have never seen before. Such experiences are almost always enlightening. Sometimes they are deeply moving spiritually. They are the reward of scripture study, the way in which the scriptures come to bear on our lives. They give us insights into ourselves and our relations to others. They remind us of our duties. They help us understand and appreciate the Atonement. They carry us to a remembrance of the blessings we have received and, so, to humility and gratitude. I believe that using questions to help us think about the scriptures fosters these kinds of experience, so I offer these questions to other students of scripture as “seed money” that I hope will increase the value of their scripture study as they add their own questions and reflections to this seed and allow their study to grow.

Naturally, there are many more questions that can be asked about any part of the Doctrine and Covenants; I have asked only a few of those possible. As I said, were I to write this book a second time, I would doubtless create a very different set of questions than these. Nevertheless, I hope I have included questions that will help someone studying for a Sunday School or other lesson from the Doctrine and Covenants. I also hope they will help those who are preparing to teach those lessons. Given those hopes, these sets of questions correspond to the material suggested in the *Doctrine and Covenants and Church History Class Member Study Guide* for the Sunday School lessons. Because those lessons sometimes cover a lot of material, not every set of study questions in this book covers all the chapters designated in the study guide.

If you don't have questions of your own around which you can organize your lesson, perhaps mine will help you. If you are preparing a lesson, perhaps you will find a question or two among mine that you can use as foci for your lesson. Perhaps reading my questions will help you think of your own questions. In either case, the purpose of this book will have been fulfilled.

In my experience, one or two good questions in the hands of a prepared teacher are sufficient for an excellent lesson. Of course that presumes that the teacher has learned to control the discussion in a class so that it does not get away from the scriptures into personal flights of fancy or onto the gospel hobby horses we sometimes take such pleasure in riding. Mostly that takes practice, enough practice to give you confidence.

But there are a variety of methods that can help. Here is one that I have used and can recommend: Class begins with a brief review of the lesson from the week before (perhaps of about five minutes), followed by an overview of the reading for this week (another five or ten minutes). As part of this overview it may be important to discuss some of the history surrounding the reception of the revelation or revelations covered in the lesson. Then the class spends most of the time discussing one or two salient questions that are specifically about the scriptures assigned for the week. They may come from the lesson manual provided by the Church. They may come from this book. In the best eventuality, they come from your personal study of the material. The class discussion will not cover everything in the assigned material or in the lesson manual. There is always more in the material suggested for any lesson than can be covered in one lesson. But approaching the lesson in that way will cover something sufficiently well to help class members appreciate the reading and be prepared to do more individual study. When it goes well, as it usually does in the hands of a teacher who has prepared well, both by study and also by the prayer of faith (see D&C 88:118 and 109:7 and 14), a lesson of this sort not only is a good experience in itself but also encourages those in the class to learn from the scriptures after the class is over.

I assume that those teaching or preparing for the Gospel Doctrine course will take advantage of various materials on LDS history, including *Our Heritage: A Brief History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. Latter-day Saints, especially those who read English, have access to a

great many works on Church history. Using these resources will often make the lessons both more interesting and more intelligible. However, my notes here will focus not on the historical context of the revelations in the Doctrine and Covenants but on the revelations themselves, bringing in historical context only as necessary. As a result, the notes may be an aid in preparing a lesson, but they are generally insufficient.

A good question or two about a passage of scripture can also be the basis for an excellent talk for sacrament meeting: If the passage on which you are focusing is sufficiently brief, read it at the beginning of the talk, restating the parts most important to your talk in your own words. Make a point of raising your question in the context of the scriptures that brought it to your attention. Then discuss your thinking about the question. Explain the ideas that came to you in thinking about it. Talk about the implications of what you have learned. Show how what you have learned is relevant to your life and to the lives of those to whom you are speaking. To conclude, summarize what you have said, if your talk has been long enough to need a summary, and bear your testimony.

Over the years, many colleagues, friends, fellow members of the LDS Church, and university students have helped me think about the scriptures. Nate Noorlander has been invaluable in helping put these into publishable form, not only with formatting, but also with questions about my questions and suggestions for improvement, a task to which Joseph Spencer has also made a significant contribution. Jenny Webb did more than an outsider could imagine in putting this book into a good format. Pat and

Larry Wimmer and Art and Janet Bassett, who were willing to talk with me for hours about the Sunday School lessons, were especially helpful. I owe all of them thanks.

As always, I owe more than thanks to my wife and children who have borne with my idiosyncrasies for many years. Finally, I am grateful to my grandchildren—and to the rest of my posterity—simply for being. I hope that this work will help them have and increase their testimonies of Jesus.

Background Information

BEFORE THE DOCTRINE AND COVENANTS we had a volume of scripture called the “Book of Commandments” (1833), short for “A Book of Commandments for the Government of the Church of Christ.” This was an incomplete collection of the Prophet Joseph Smith’s revelations containing 65 sections (not the same as the first 65 of the present-day Doctrine and Covenants).

But the Book of Commandments was incomplete because a mob in Independence, Missouri, had broken into the printing shop where the collection was being printed, destroyed the press and type, and scattered the pages. Some Saints gathered what pages they could find and bound them, with the result being less than had been planned.

In 1835, a new collection of revelations was printed and named “Doctrine and Covenants.” Unlike the Book of Commandments, it contained two parts—the “Lectures on Faith” (the doctrine) and the previous Book of Commandments with new sections added—bringing the total to 101 (the covenants). The order of the revelations in the second section of the Doctrine and Covenants was different than it had been in the Book of Commandments. In the latter, it had been chronological, while in the new book revelations were grouped according to subject matter: first were revelations on priesthood and church organization, followed by the sections from the Book of Commandments. In 1876

the sections were rearranged so that all but section 1 were put in chronological order.

The “Lectures on Faith” were lessons used in the School of the Prophets the previous winter. They were dropped from the LDS canon in 1921, perhaps because the doctrine taught in them concerning the Godhead wasn’t consistent with the continuing revelations of the prophets. However, the title “Doctrine and Covenants” was retained. Since we have retained the word *doctrine* in the title of this book of scripture, it is reasonable to assume that even without the “Lectures on Faith,” the book we now have contains doctrine, in other words, the teachings of the prophets.

In the Old and New Testaments, the word *doctrine* usually translates a word that means “instruction,” with an emphasis on the activity of teaching more than on its content. (In the Old Testament, occasionally it also translates words meaning “announcement” or “chastisement.”) In nineteenth-century English it also meant “instruction,” but with an emphasis on the content. Which meaning do you think best helps us think about the Doctrine and Covenants as scripture?

The word *covenant* appears 479 times in the scriptures—it is one of their most common words. The word translated “covenant” in the Old Testament is from a word meaning “to choose” and also “to cause to eat, to cause to partake.” It means “to form a confederacy, to make a compact.” Significantly, anciently a covenant seems to have been made by exchanging pieces of food, often meat. In Joseph Smith’s time, the English word *covenant* primarily meant “a mutual agreement to act in certain ways.” How can the

revelations contained in the Doctrine and Covenants be considered covenants? How does a covenant differ from a contract?

Questions

What do you make of the changes that have occurred to our collection of modern revelations? Is the Doctrine and Covenants a new book or a revised edition of the Book of Commandments?

Does the full title of the Book of Commandments differentiate it from the Doctrine and Covenants, or does it help us understand better what we find in the Doctrine and Covenants?

Did the deletion of the “Lectures on Faith” change the book substantially? How about the addition of sections 137 and 137 or the two official declarations?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 1

Doctrine and Covenants 1

Section 1 is a preface (given out of chronological order) to the rest of the Doctrine and Covenants.

Does it change our understanding of this section if we think of it as the preface to the never-published Book of Commandments? How or why not?

What do you find in this section that might be a kind of preparation for reading the other revelations? What attitudes toward revelation in general do you find enjoined here?

Doctrine and Covenants 1

Verses 1–2: The Church was barely eighteen months old when this revelation was received. Why is it addressed not only to the Saints, but also to the rest of the world?

Why do you think the Lord uses the metaphor of *escaping* his eye?

What do you make of the fact that no one can escape being seen and that no one can avoid seeing?

Verse 3: Who are the rebellious? How will they hear the voice of the Lord? How will hearing the voice of the Lord pierce them with sorrow?

When have *we* heard the voice of the Lord? When have we felt as if our iniquities were spoken on the housetops? In

other words, when does hearing the voice of the Lord reveal our secret acts?

Verses 4–5: To what does “the voice of warning” refer to in verse 4?

Verse 6: To what does the word *this* refer to in the phrase “this is my authority”? For what is its authority?

Verses 7–10: How do those sent out with the message of the restoration seal the unbelieving and rebellious? What does *seal* mean here?

Why doesn’t the section say something about them also sealing the righteous?

Verse 12: Given the subject matter of this section, what do you think the Lord is admonishing us to do when he tells us to prepare for that which is to come?

What does it mean to say that the Lord is nigh? Is he nigh temporally or spiritually?

Verses 13–14: What does it mean to say that the Lord’s sword is “bathed in heaven”? (The phrase is from Isaiah 34:5. Does reading that phrase in its original context help?)

What does it mean to be cut off from among the people?

Verse 15: To whom does the word *they* refer? Who is the Lord referring to when he says “*they* have strayed”?

How does one stray from an ordinance? How might we stray from our ordinances?

Is the Lord speaking of two things or of one thing when he says “they have strayed from mine ordinances, and have

broken mine everlasting covenant”? In other words, are breaking the everlasting covenant and straying from the Lord’s ordinances the same thing?

Verse 16: What does it mean to seek the Lord? (Recall that the Book of Mormon frequently uses related phrases.) Is seeking the Lord the same as remembering him?

What is the Lord’s righteousness? How would it be established? How might we seek to establish it?

What does it mean to say we each walk in our own way? What does it mean to say that our idols have images “in the likeness of the world”? What substance does an idol have? How do our idols have that substance?

Verses 17–18: Why did the Lord call Joseph Smith and the “others” mentioned?

In what sense are those callings a response to calamity? What calamity? Did calling Joseph and others stop that calamity?

Verses 19–23: What are the weak things? What are the strong? Why does the Lord describe them that way? Why does the Lord want the weak things to break down the strong? How will they do so? By what power?

In this context, what does it mean to counsel our fellows? What is wrong with doing so?

The Lord speaks of speaking in the name of God, increasing faith, establishing his everlasting covenant, and proclaiming the fulness of the gospel, on the one hand, and trusting in the arm of flesh and counseling each other, on the other? How are these alternatives to each other?

Why is it important for faith to increase in the earth? What is the everlasting covenant? What is the *fulness* of the gospel?

Verse 24: How can we understand the Doctrine and Covenants as a collection of commandments when many of the revelations in them contain nothing that commands us or someone at the time of the revelation to do something? Is there a way of understanding the word *commandment* more broadly than we usually do?

Why does this verse begin as it does? Why point out that God is the source of this revelation? Wouldn't a person already have to believe that this was from God in order to believe this verse?

What does it mean to say that these are given in our weaknesses, after the manner of our language? Over and over again in the Book of Mormon we see references to the weakness of the people writing the book. Why is the word *weakness* singular rather than plural, both here and in the Book of Mormon? How does that change the meaning? Why does the Lord bring up our weakness here? Why is it important for those reading the Doctrine and Covenants to know what this verse teaches?

Verses 25–28: How can we use the Doctrine and Covenants to do these things for us? How, for example, can it show us that we are in error or that we have sinned? How can the revelations of this book give us wisdom? How might they give us “knowledge from time to time.”

Why is the word *knowledge* followed by the qualifier “from time to time” when the word *wisdom* is not?

How do wisdom and knowledge differ here, or do they?

Verse 29: How does this verse fit into its context? Is it another part of the list that begins in verse 20?

How does Joseph's power to translate come through the mercy of God?

Verse 30: This verse too seems to follow from something, but from what?

How does the Doctrine and Covenants give us power to lay the foundation for the Church? (Is this a repetition of the idea in verse 6?)

What does it mean to say that the Church is true? We can easily speak of sentences or claims being true, but how can a church be true? Think of other ways in which we use the word *true*, besides using it to describe sentences or beliefs. For example a line can be true. Do those other ways of using the word help us understand what it might mean to say that the Church is true?

What does it mean to say that the Church is living? What would it mean for a church to be dead?

Why does the Lord add "speaking unto the church collectively and not individually"?

Verse 31: What does it mean that the Lord cannot look on sin with the least degree of allowance? Isn't that a message of despair: if we have any sin at all, doesn't that mean he will not look on us at all? What is our alternative?

Verses 32–33: How do we repent?

What does it mean to *do* rather than *keep* the commandments?

What does it mean to lose what light we have? How does failure to repent rob us of our light?

If the Lord's Spirit won't always strive with us, he must now be striving with us. How so? Is that a message of hope?

Verses 34–36: Verses 34–35 say the Lord is willing to make these things known to all, that he is no respecter of persons. How might knowing this help us have faith in the Lord's voice of warning, in the revelations, the restoration, etc.?

What does the Lord being no respecter of persons have to do with the fact that peace will soon be taken from the earth? What are several possible meanings of the phrase "peace shall be taken from the earth"?

What is the devil's dominion? Why so?

Why does the revelation use the word *Idumea* to mean "the world"? The name occurs four times in the Old Testament (twice in Isaiah 34:5–6, and once each in Ezekiel 35:15 and 36:5). Does the Old Testament context help explain what the Lord says here?

Verse 37: How do we go about searching the commandments in the Doctrine and Covenants? What does it mean to say that a commandment is true? To say that it is faithful? How do commandments contain promises?

Verses 38–39: Like verse 24, this begins with the Lord pointing out that these are his words. Why? What is his word that will not pass away? How can a word be fulfilled? How can it

be fulfilled by someone speaking, by a voice? Of what does the Spirit bear record?

“To abide” means more than merely “to last.” It means “to live with,” “to dwell.” What might the word *abide* tell us about our relation to truth?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 2

Verses from Doctrine and Covenants 18; 19;
58; 76; 88; and 93

Doctrine and Covenants 18

Verse 9: The Lord says, “I speak to you two; for I command all to repent.” Suppose we switched the clauses but retained the meaning. The Lord would say, “Since I command everyone to repent, I’m speaking to you.” What point is he making to Oliver Cowdery and David Whitmer?

In a parallel clause, the Lord says to them, “I’m speaking to you in the way I spoke to Paul.” How does the parallel between this and the previous clause affect how we understand the previous clause?

Given the things said in this verse, what do you think the Lord intended Cowdery and Whitmer to understand by the comparison of them to Paul?

Verses 10–11: In what ways do we remember what verse 10 teaches? In what ways might we forget that fact?

Verse 11 begins with the word *for*, as if what follows explains what was said in the previous verse. Does verse 11 explain verse 10, or does verse 10 explain verse 11? Either way, how is the content of each of these verses related to that of the other verse?

Why is Jesus called by his title Redeemer in verse 11?

Why does verse 11 say, “suffered death in the flesh” rather than “suffered death”? Does “suffered the pain of all men” mean “suffered all the pain of each person” or does it mean “suffered the pains that all men suffer”? How would you justify your answer? Is your justification based on scripture or another kind of revelation, or is it based on something else?

Does Christ’s behavior when he suffered in the garden and on the cross give us a type for what our relation to our fellow human beings should be? If no, why not? If yes, can you give concrete examples of what it should mean for our behavior?

Verse 12: We often speak of the Lord’s resurrection making both the general resurrection and our personal resurrection possible. Here, however, we are taught that the resurrection makes our return to the Savior possible. What is the connection between these two teachings?

Does the necessity of resurrection tell us anything about why ministering to the poor and the afflicted is so important in the gospel?

Doctrine and Covenants 19

Verses 16–19: This is one long sentence. The first part of this sentence, verse 16, holds out a promise. The next part, verse 17, contains a warning of what will happen if the promise isn’t accepted: those who don’t repent must suffer as the Savior suffered. Verses 18 and 19 expand on verse 17 by telling us about his suffering. Through verse 18, the message is relatively straightforward (though see the following questions). But verse 19 is more difficult. How does the phrase “glory be to the Father” work? What does it tell

us in that verse? What does “preparations *unto* the children of men” mean?

Verse 16: Why does this verse begin “I, God”? Why does he remind us in this context that he is God?

Verse 17: Christ says that those who do not repent must suffer “even as I.” Does he mean by that merely that they too must suffer, or does he mean that they must suffer the same kind of suffering, even if not to the same degree? Or does he mean that they must suffer exactly as he did, in kind and degree? Why do you answer the way you do? Is your answer based on scripture or another kind of revelation, or is it based on something else?

Verses 18–19: What does the description of Christ’s suffering in verse 18 tell us? What is the point of the graphic description of his suffering?

Verse 19 begins *nevertheless*. Nevertheless with regard to what?

Verse 20: *Wherefore* means something like “because of this.” Because of what?

The verse says that feeling the Spirit withdraw is a small taste of what eternal punishment is like. Think back in your own life. Have you ever experienced the withdrawal of the Spirit? What was it like? What might that foretaste tell us?

Doctrine and Covenants 58

Verse 42: What does it mean to say that the Lord remembers our sins no more? What does *remember* mean in this context? In the sacrament prayers, we eat in remembrance

of Christ's body. Does the kind of remembrance that we exercise there (which must be more than merely recalling him to our consciousness) say anything about the kind of remembrance meant in this verse?

Doctrine and Covenants 76

Verse 62: To whom does the word *these* refer?

Why would we want to dwell in the presence of God forever? What is there about being in his presence, rather than someplace else, that is desirable?

Does being in the presence of God mean standing before his throne perpetually? Why do you think what you do in answer to that question? If it doesn't mean that, what does it mean?

Why does this verse speak of "*his* Christ"? Is there another Messiah?

Verse 63: What event does this verse describe? When will it occur?

Verse 64 (and 54): Why is the "church of the Firstborn" (Christ) also called the "church of Enoch" (verse 67)? Aren't we commanded not to call the church after the name of someone other than the Savior (3 Nephi 27:7–8)? (See also D&C 45:54 and 63:18.)

Verse 65: Who are "the just"? Compare John 5:29, Mosiah 15:24, and 3 Nephi 26:5, as well as Luke 14:14 and Acts 24:15. Why is being just so important to our salvation? How is being just related to being righteous?

Verse 66: What is “Mount Zion”? Why do the scriptures use that particular metaphor?

Why is the kingdom of God thought of as a city? How might that phrase have been particularly significant to the Saints at the time of this revelation? (Compare D&C 45:64–71 and 57:2–3.)

Why compare the kingdom to both a mountain and a city at the same time? In other words, why are these two metaphors mixed here?

Verse 67: What does “come to an innumerable company of angels” mean?

Who are the “innumerable company of angels”? Why are they innumerable?

Why are “general assembly” and “church” parallel to each other? Why are “church of Enoch” and “church of the Firstborn” parallel? What does each description teach us?

Verse 68: This verse tells us that the names of those who are members of the church of the Firstborn are “written in heaven” and that God and Christ—who make no mistakes—make all the judgments in that church. What is this verse teaching? What is the significance of the names being written in heaven rather than, presumably, on earth? What is the significance of telling us that perfect judges do the judging?

Verse 69: What does it mean to be a just person? What level of glory do the just inherit?

What does it mean to be “made perfect”? Who makes us perfect? How? What does the phrase “just [persons] made

perfect through Jesus” suggest about the things we do to perfect ourselves?

What does it mean to say that Christ is the *mediator* of the new covenant? What does a mediator do? What does a mediator do in ordinary cases? How does that apply to what Christ does for us? How does someone mediate a covenant?

We sometimes speak of Christ paying for our sins. Though the scriptures speak of him suffering for sin and of him manumitting us from slavery to sin—and they use other metaphors—they don’t use the metaphor of payment to describe what his atonement does for us. If we use scriptural language rather than other kinds of language, how would we explain the Atonement?

Verse 70: What does the word *glory* mean? What does it mean to have a celestial rather than a terrestrial or telestial body?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 14: What does *redemption* mean in this verse? Redemption from what?

How does redemption make resurrection come to pass?

Verse 15: This is an important doctrine, for with some other religions, traditional Christianity has sometimes (though not usually) denigrated the body, seeing it as a hindrance to our spiritual lives. Many in our culture still look on the body as a hindrance (or, in backlash, they think of the body as the only thing). The privilege and

acclaim we sometimes give supposedly intellectual professions over more physical professions is one of the remnants of this misunderstanding of the body and the spirit. In what other ways do we sometimes forget this necessary unity of spirit and body?

Note: though the soul is defined here as the unity of the spirit and body, it isn't always or even often used that way in other scriptures. This definition is one that seems to have been saved for the latter days. Therefore, when you read the word *soul* in scripture, you must ask yourself whether the writer meant *spirit*, or *soul* as it is used here.

Verse 16: How is the resurrection of the dead the redemption of the soul (spirit and body)? If everyone is guaranteed resurrection, does it follow that everyone is guaranteed redemption of the soul? Why wouldn't that contradict the doctrine that only some will receive an inheritance in the celestial kingdom?

Verse 17: What does it mean to say that Christ *quickens* all things? In what sense does he quicken *all* things?

Why does he *here* insert a reminder of his decree that the poor and the meek will inherit the earth? How is that particular decree relevant to this particular discussion of the resurrection and of the redemption of the soul?

Verse 18: To what does the word *it* refer at the beginning of this verse? How is it to be sanctified?

What does *sanctified* mean here?

Why does sanctification (as it is used here) only prepare us for celestial glory? Why isn't it the same as celestial glory?

Doctrine and Covenants 93

Verse 33: What does it mean to say “man is spirit”? Among the word *spirit*’s meanings are “the principle in a living being that makes it alive,” “that about a person which is immaterial,” “the part of a person which survives death,” “the active power of some emotion or frame of mind” (as in “the spirit of the party”), “a tendency, impulse, or inclination,” and “a person’s character.” How is the word *spirit* being used in this verse?

To what does the word *elements* refer?

Why would spirit and element need to be connected inseparably in order to “receive a fulness of joy”?

Lesson 3

Joseph Smith—History 1:1–26

Verses 1–2: Why does Joseph write this history? What does that say to us about its usefulness to us?

Verses 3–4: Why does Joseph give this account of his family as part of his account of the origins of the Church? What does his birth, the places his family has lived, and the number and names of his family members have to do with explaining the “rise and progress of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”?

Verse 5: Joseph emphasizes the divisions that the “excitement on the subject of religion” caused. Why does he do so; what’s the point? How can we preach the gospel without causing similar divisions?

Verse 6: What caused the strife among the sects?

Verses 8–10: What about Methodism might have attracted Joseph Smith? What things prevented him from joining the Methodists?

Verses 11–12: Was Joseph reading casually, or was he studying seriously? What in these verses might give you the answer to the question?

Verse 13: What gave Joseph the confidence to ask which religion was right? (What does it mean to give liberally? What does the word *upbraid* mean?)

Verse 14: When Joseph says he had never made the attempt to pray vocally, what does he mean? Do you suppose that he had never offered the prayer over the food at home? Why is it significant that he prayed vocally?

Verses 15–16: Why does this dark power prevent Joseph from speaking? Compare Joseph's experience to that of Alma the Younger. How is it different? How is it the same? What might the differences and similarities tell us?

Verse 17: Why doesn't Joseph name the two personages who appear to him?

Verses 18–19: In what sense were the sects wrong? What does it mean to say that they are an abomination to the Lord? (How, for example, can we explain that to nonmembers without offending them?)

What does the word *professor* mean here? University teacher? What is its literal meaning?

What does it mean to draw near to the Lord with our lips but to have our hearts far from him?

How might we sometimes teach for doctrines the commandments of men but deny the power of godliness?

Verse 20: What things might the Lord have said to Joseph that he didn't write? The implication is that he could write them later. What might they have been?

Our pictures often show Joseph kneeling as he listens to the Son, but what might this verse indicate?

Some have used Joseph's failure to tell his mother what happened as evidence that his story isn't true, that it was

made up years later. Why do you think he didn't tell his mother of this experience?

Verse 21: Why does he tell the preacher what he didn't tell his mother?

Verses 22–23: In what ways might the “professors of religion” have “excited the public mind” against Joseph? Why did they react so strongly against Joseph?

Verse 24: Joseph compares his experience to that of Paul. How are those experiences the same? How are they different? What might those similarities and differences tell us?

Verses 25–26: How would you describe the tone of these verses? What might that tone say about Joseph and his story?

Though the unconverted might believe Joseph is deceived, I don't think they can read this story as the story of a liar. How would a deceived person perhaps produce a different story than one who is lying?

There seem to be no people in his life from this period, outside of his family, who remember Joseph Smith telling of the first vision. How would you explain that, given the account Joseph gives here of his persecution for his vision? If a nonmember asked you about this, what would you say?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 4

Joseph Smith—History 1:27–65;
Doctrine and Covenants 3; 5; 10; 17;
20:5–15; and 84:54–62

Before you read the scriptures assigned for this lesson, I recommend that you read at least pages 5–10 of *Our Heritage* and, preferably, some of the fuller historical accounts of Joseph Smith and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. That reading will help you understand better the context in which the revelations of these verses were given and the incidents referred to in them.

Joseph Smith—History 1

Verse 28: What do you make of Joseph Smith’s observation that, as a boy, he “was guilty of levity, and sometimes associated with jovial company, etc., not consistent with that character which ought to be maintained by one who was called of God as I had been”? What do you think he felt was consistent with such a character?

Verse 29: Joseph says that he often felt condemned for his weaknesses. By whom? If by God, do you think that his feelings were accurate or that he was feeling more guilt than he should have?

How are this instance of prayer and that in the Sacred Grove similar? How are they different?

Verses 30–32: Why do you think that Joseph gives us this much detail about Moroni’s appearance?

Verses 33–35: Notice the contrast in detail between these verses and the previous three. In these, he gives a summary rather than a quotation, summary rather than exact detail. What might account for that difference?

Verse 34: A significant number of Latter-day Saint scholars today believe that the events of the Book of Mormon took place in Central America among a small group of people who were probably surrounded by others whom they do not mention, at least not directly. How does that belief square with Moroni’s statement to Joseph Smith that the Book of Mormon is “an account of the former inhabitants of *this continent*” (*italics added*)?

Verses 36–41: Why do you think that Moroni quoted so many scriptures? Why might they have been important to Joseph? Would he have understood their import at the time? Why or why not?

Verse 42: Why do you think Moroni enjoined Joseph to keep the plates and the Urim and Thummim hidden?

Verses 44–46: The only difference between the two revelations in these verses and the first one seems to be the additional and different warnings at the ends of these two. Why three revelations almost exactly alike on the same night (and then again the next day)? If he was given the three revelations to emphasize the importance of their content, then why weren’t they identical?

Verses 47–49: Joseph Smith has had three visitations by an angel during the night, but in the morning he gets up and goes about work as usual. What does this say about his character? What does it suggest about how we should respond to our own spiritual experiences?

Why do you think Moroni told Joseph to tell his father about the visions?

Verses 50–54: What was the purpose in having Joseph go to the hill and look at the plates but not retrieve them? Why wait four years but come back each year in the meantime?

Verse 54 tells us that Moroni taught Joseph Smith about the Restoration on these visits. Do you think he received instruction on occasions other than these visits, or was this only an annual event?

Verses 55–58: Why does Joseph include these details of his personal life?

Verse 59: How old was Joseph Smith when he received the plates? Is that relevant to how we understand his story?

Verses 60–62: Joseph tells us what his life was like during this time, but do you think his neighbors would have given a similar description? Do you think they saw him as someone persecuted? If not, why not?

Why is Martin Harris's intervention so remarkable?

Verses 63–65: For whom was this test of Joseph's work made? Joseph, Martin, or someone else?

Here's what we assume was the transcript that Martin Harris took to Professor Anthon:

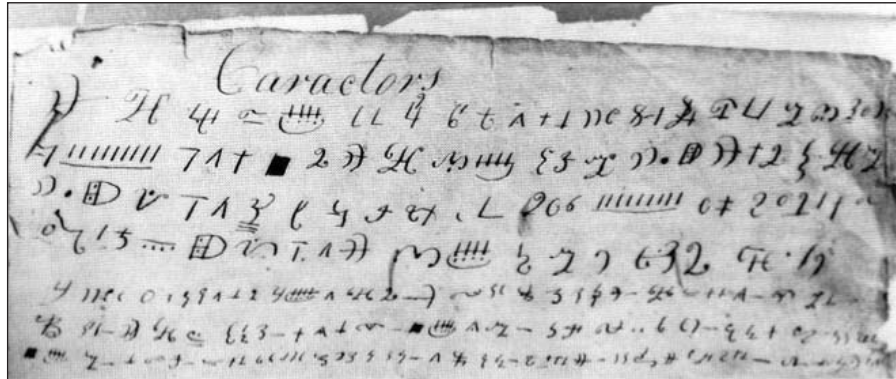


Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons. Original in Library Archives, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, The Auditorium, Independence, Missouri.

This is like no known script. If Martin Harris remembers Charles Anthon's response correctly, what do you think that might tell us about Anthon?

Verses 66–67: What do you think motivated Oliver Cowdery to seek Joseph Smith out? What motivated him to become his scribe?

Doctrine and Covenants 3

Verse 1: Why can't the works of God come to naught? What does it mean that we cannot frustrate them? If we cannot, does that mean that what we do is inconsequential—that if we do not do it, it will get done anyway? If so, why isn't it irrelevant whether we do them or not? If the works of God cannot come to naught, how do we explain things such as our failure to build a temple in Jackson County though we were commanded to do so?

Verse 4: In what ways do we boast in our own strength? Do we ever do so implicitly rather than explicitly, without thinking that we are doing it?

How do we set at naught the counsels of God? Is there a difference between boasting in our own strength and setting his counsels at naught?

What do the scriptures mean when they speak of God's vengeance? Does he "get even"? If he is our Father and loves as a father, how can he take vengeance on us or on our brothers and sisters?

Verse 6: Do the commandments and laws of God always run counter to the "persuasions of men"? What does that phrase mean? Why does the Lord use the word *persuasion* here?

Verse 7: How and when do we fear men more than God? How do we recognize when we are doing so?

Verse 8: Notice that the Lord doesn't promise protection *from* the fiery darts of the adversary, but support *against* them. What's the difference?

Verse 9: The Lord says, "Thou art Joseph." Joseph knows who he is, so why does the Lord remind him of his name?

Verse 10: Had Joseph lost his calling during the time of this sin? What might that tell us about our own callings?

What does it mean to lose one's calling in the Church? Given what we see here, is it possible for us to do that even without having been released from that calling?

Verse 12: *Wicked* is a strong adjective to use to describe Martin Harris. We would seldom use it to describe a person

like him who has been foolish. Why is it appropriate here? What might that say about our own mistakes?

Verse 13: Does this verse give an answer to the immediately previous question?

It is doubtful that Harris thought himself doing any of these things when he asked Joseph to let him have the 116 pages of the translation. And he received them only after Joseph received a revelation giving permission for him to have them. But God's judgment is just, so in spite of whatever Harris might have thought, he "set at naught the counsels of God," broke "the most sacred promises which were made before God," and "depended upon his own judgment and boasted in his own wisdom." How could Harris have recognized that was what he was doing?

Are there occasions when we convince ourselves to treat God's counsel as nothing, break our sacred promises, depend on our own judgment, and boast in our own wisdom without recognizing that is what we are doing? How do we avoid making that mistake?

Verses 16–20: Compare this to the title page of the Book of Mormon. How are they the same? What differences are there?

Doctrine and Covenants 5

How has Martin Harris changed since the revelation of section 3? How has Joseph changed? (Consider Romans 8:28, as well as D&C 90:24, 98:3, 100:15, and 105:40 as you think about this section.)

Verse 7: What does this verse say about the Book of Mormon and attempts to prove it empirically or historically?

Verse 14: Is the Lord referring us to Revelation 12:6 by speaking of the Church “coming forth out of the wilderness”? If so, what might the wilderness, the desert signify? Is it related to the Israelite stay in the wilderness? What would it mean to be in the wilderness rather than dead? What does it mean that in the Restoration the church comes out of the wilderness?

What does it mean to describe the woman in the wilderness as “clear as the moon, and fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners”? What do you make of the fact that this extended metaphor comes from the Song of Solomon, where it is used to describe the writer’s beloved?

What is the place of the Book of Mormon in bringing the church out of the wilderness?

Verses 16–18: What purpose do the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon serve?

Doctrine and Covenants 10

Verses 1–3: Is there a lesson for us in Joseph’s experience? When might we find ourselves in circumstances like these?

Verse 4: In concrete terms, what might this have meant to Joseph Smith? How does this advice make sense to us? How can we avoid letting it become an excuse for us not to do what needs to be done?

Verse 6: This says that Martin Harris sought to destroy Joseph Smith. Did he do so intentionally? If not, why doesn’t the Lord take that into account in condemning Harris?

Verses 10–33: The substance of these verses is that those who have the pages intend to alter them so that they can “expose”

Joseph Smith as a fraud. Therefore, Joseph ought not to translate them again. Why are these verses so repetitious?

Verses 34–37: How would you put the Lord’s advice in these verses in your own words? What is his explanation for why he told Joseph not to show the translation to the world?

Verses 38–45: How has the Lord outwitted Satan?

What is the difference between wisdom, which the Lord has, and cunning, which is Satan’s?

What is the difference between the part that Joseph has already translated and that which he will now translate?

Verses 46–52: According to these verses, what decided the contents of the Book of Mormon? Does that suggest anything about how we ought to read it?

What did the Book of Mormon prophets pray for regarding “this land”? To what does “this land” refer?

Verses 53–55: Why does verse 54 say what it does? What problem, question, or possible misunderstanding does that verse answer?

Does verse 55 teach that *all* members of the Church will enter the celestial kingdom? If not, why not?

Verse 56: Those who do not fear the Lord will be disturbed. In this context, what does it mean to fear the Lord?

Why in particular should the people mentioned in this verse fear the Lord?

The verse pairs disobeying the commandments with building up a church to get gain, etc. It is as if the two go together: those who are disobedient build churches for gain; those

who build churches for gain don't obey the commandments. Is that true only for those outside of the LDS Church, or is there some sense in which it also speaks to us? Do we ever build up the LDS Church to get personal gain?

Verses 57–70: We have Christ's testimony of who he is and what his work is. Do the things of which he testifies suggest things about which we, too, should bear testimony?

Verse 63 tells us that Christ has revealed the Book of Mormon "that there may not be so much contention" because Satan has created contention about Christ's doctrines. Can you think of specific doctrinal contentions that the Book of Mormon settles?

What are we to make of the definition of the Lord's church that we find in verses 67–68? Does this mean that some non-LDS are members of that church? If not, explain why not. Does it mean that all LDS are members of his church? If not, explain why not.

Why does verse 70 conclude this revelation with an admonition to *remember* the words *your Lord*?

Doctrine and Covenants 17

Verse 1: What does it mean that Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris should rely on the Lord's word? Why is that a prerequisite for seeing the plates?

Verse 4: How will their testimony prevent Joseph from being destroyed?

Verse 7: When the Lord says the Three Witnesses have received the same power as Joseph, what does he mean? What

about when he says they have received the same faith? The same gift? Do we, perhaps, have the same power, faith, and gift if we, like the witnesses, testify of the truth of the Book of Mormon?

Verse 8: What are the “last commandments” that the Lord is asking them to do? What does it mean to *do* rather than to *keep* a commandment?

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Verses 5–12: Notice that this is one long sentence. What is this sentence as a whole about? One way to decide the answer to that question is to decide which clause is the main clause.

Verse 5: What does it mean to receive a remission of sin? How do we get entangled in the vanities of the world? What does “vanities of the world” mean?

Verse 6: Do we know to what angelic visitation this verse refers?

Verse 7: How can commandments inspire us?

Verse 8: We probably all know what “power from on high” means. And we all know what it means to translate the Book of Mormon. But what does it mean that Joseph was given power to translate “by the means which were before prepared”?

Verses 9–12: What are the key elements that describe the Book of Mormon (verses 9–12)? How are those relevant to the testimonies of the Three Witnesses? How are they relevant to our testimonies of the Book of Mormon?

Verse 10: When this verse says the Book of Mormon was given by inspiration, is it referring to the inspiration the Lord gave the Book of Mormon prophets, or to the inspiration he gave Joseph Smith?

When the verse says the Book of Mormon “is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels,” of whom is it speaking? Who is it that declares the Book of Mormon to the world?

Verse 11: *What* proves to the world that the scriptures are true? Is this verse referring to the Book of Mormon? To Joseph’s experience with repentance? To the commandments that inspired him?

Verse 12: This verse tells us that something mentioned in the sentence (verses 5 through 12) shows that the Lord is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. What shows us that?

Verse 13: The world will be judged by the great witnesses it has, witnesses that have been mentioned. Who are those witnesses? (Does the last phrase of the verse help us?)

To what does “this work” refer? To the restoration of the Church? To the Book of Mormon? To the testimony of witnesses? To something else?

Verses 14–15: Those who receive it and work righteousness will receive a crown. Those who do not receive it will be condemned. What is *it*?

Doctrine and Covenants 84

Verses 54–57: Verse 54 says we fail to believe, or we may believe but take our beliefs lightly. If you were listening to this

being said by Joseph, you would probably immediately take it to refer to the covenant already mentioned, the oath and covenant of the priesthood (verse 39), rather than to what is to follow, “the new covenant, even the Book of Mormon” (verse 57). How might we take the oath and covenant of the priesthood lightly? What does it mean to take lightly the Book of Mormon as a covenant?

How is the Book of Mormon a covenant? To what does “the former commandments” refer in this context?

What does it mean to not only *say* but *do* what has been written? Why does the Lord emphasize the written word?

Verses 55–56: These verses say the whole church is guilty of either vanity (literally “uselessness,” or taking our beliefs lightly) or unbelief. President Benson said that we are *still* under the condemnation pronounced in these verses. What must we do to remove the condemnation?

Verses 60–61: Notice something interesting about these verses: verse 61 says the assembled high priests are blessed because the Lord will forgive them and he forgives *with* a commandment. As used here, does *with* mean “by means of” or “at the same time as”? If the former, how can a commandment bring forgiveness? If the latter, what is the point of what the Lord says here? He could easily have said, “I forgive you and give you this commandment.” Why did he say “*with* this commandment”?

Verse 62: The word *therefore* at the beginning of the verse indicates that it follows from something that has already been said. What might that be?

Lesson 5

Doctrine and Covenants 6; 8; 9; and
Joseph Smith—History 1:8–17

Those who are preparing lessons should notice that the scriptural material for this lesson and for lesson 6 are almost identical.

Doctrine and Covenants 6

Verse 2: What does it mean to say that God’s word is quick? Powerful? Sharper than a two-edged sword? In what sense does his word divide joints and marrow? In other words, what is the significance of this metaphor?

Verse 7: Given the things that have happened to Joseph in the recent past, what is the significance of this verse?

In what sense are those with eternal life rich?

Verse 9: How do we say nothing but repentance? How can we do that without beating the subject to death, without driving people crazy? What *is* repentance? How do we preach it or say it? Does Mosiah 18 help us answer this question?

Verse 10: What is the gift referred to here? How can our gifts be blessings, when they usually bring obligations?

Verse 11: The word *mystery* means, literally, “secret.” What are the mysteries the Lord is speaking of here? In what sense or senses are they secret?

Verse 12: Why should Oliver Cowdery keep his gift concealed? What does “of thy faith” mean?

Verse 13: Why is salvation the greatest gift? How is the word *salvation* used here? Is it being used in contradistinction to *exaltation*?

Verse 14: What has brought Oliver to where he is? What could that mean to us?

Verse 17: Why does the Lord have to witness to Oliver that the words he is writing are true? What kinds of doubts might Oliver have had?

Verses 21–24: Notice that Oliver’s further witness is the peace he received as well as the knowledge that Joseph can tell him something only he knows of. (We might focus on the latter aspect of the witness, but the Lord points specifically to the former.) How is peace a witness of the truth of the gospel? What is the peace of which the Lord speaks here? When do we experience this peace?

Verse 25: Did Oliver do any translating?

Verse 27: This seems to present a “catch-22”: If Oliver has good desires, then he can assist in the Lord’s work. By implication, if he doesn’t have good desires, he can’t. But how can Oliver change his desires? It seems like either he has them or he hasn’t, and if he hasn’t, then there isn’t anything he can do about it. We sometimes use this seeming dilemma as an excuse for our sins: “I can’t change my desires; I can’t help it that I have desires for this or that.” What gets us out of this seeming dilemma in our own lives?

Verse 29: How much comfort does Joseph receive here?

Verses 34–35: How about here? What do these verses tell us about the comfort of the Lord?

Verse 36: How does one look to the Lord in every thought? In other words, what is he telling them to do here?

Verse 37: Perhaps the Lord appeared to Joseph in person when this revelation was given. Perhaps not. If not, in what ways might he have beheld the Savior's wounds? How might we do that?

Doctrine and Covenants 8

Verses 1–2: What has Oliver asked for?

Verse 3: Does the phrase “spirit of revelation” refer to the Holy Ghost or to something else?

Verse 4: The spirit of revelation is Oliver's gift. How was he to use it? (What does “apply unto it” mean?)

Verse 10: How might we trifle with our gifts?

How can we know what we ought to ask for so we can avoid asking for what we ought *not* to ask for?

Doctrine and Covenants 9

Verses 1–6, 10: Is the Lord rebuking Oliver?

Verses 7–9: To what is the Lord referring when he tells Oliver of the burning in his bosom? What is the relation of this burning to the peace discussed earlier, a peace that came in answer to his prayers (D&C 6)?

Verse 14: What is the point of the Lord's message in this verse?

Joseph Smith—History 1

See the questions on verses 8–17 for lesson 3.

Lesson 6

Doctrine and Covenants 6; 8; 9; and 11

You will find study questions for D&C 6, 8, and 9 in the materials for lesson 5.

Doctrine and Covenants 11

Verses 1–9: With slight variations, these are the same as D&C 6:1–9. There is also overlap between them and a number of other verses in other sections, such as D&C 4:4, 12:1–6, and 14:1–5. How do you explain those repetitions?

Verses 1–2: Why does the Lord announce himself? What does it mean to give heed to his word? What does it mean that his word is like a sword? What point is he making when he says his word divides joint and marrow? Why this violent imagery?

Verses 3–5: Except for in Alma 26:5, we find this harvest image exclusively in the Doctrine and Covenants. Why is this image particularly appropriate to the last days?

Here and in each of the sections that repeat this image, 4, 6, and 12, there is a close connection between the call to take part in the harvest and the admonition to ask and to knock if we wish to receive. What is the connection between those two ideas?

Verse 6: Do we know what Joseph asked that prompted this revelation? (The heading gives a clue, as do verses 8, 15–17, and 20–22.)

How would those first receiving this revelation have understood the word *Zion*, not yet having the Book of Moses or revelations about the city that is to be built?

Now that we have further revelation, how do we understand Zion? What is the cause of Zion? How can we bring its cause forth? How can we establish its cause?

Verse 7: Why do you think the Lord gives this instruction to Hyrum? Does this suggest that perhaps Hyrum was tempted by the desire for riches, or is there a better explanation? Is the Smith family history relevant here?

How does this admonition apply to us? Don't we seek for riches when we choose a career and take into important account what it will pay?

Verse 8: Does this have anything to do with D&C 4:3?

Verse 9: Here is another often-repeated admonition (Mosesiah 18:20 and D&C 19:21, as well as the already mentioned D&C 6:9, for example). What does it mean to preach *only* repentance?

The Lord admonishes Hyrum to keep the commandments, including that to bring forth his work, immediately after telling him only to preach repentance. Can you explain the connection between those admonitions?

Verses 10–11: Notice that these verses are one sentence. What is Hyrum's gift? What has having a gift to do with verse 11?

Verses 12–14: Can you decide what the word *spirit* refers to each time it is used here? Does it refer to the same thing each time?

Verse 15: Hyrum is told that he cannot preach until he is called. But section 4 (verse 3) says that we are called if we have desires. How do you reconcile these two verses?

Verse 19: Concretely, what does it mean to cleave to the Lord? What does the word *cleave* suggest (compare Genesis 2:24)?

Verses 21–22: This instruction is given to Hyrum in the context of telling him that he must wait until the translation is finished to preach. (See verse 19.) How do these verses relate to that admonition? What word had gone forth among the children of men? What is the Lord commanding Hyrum to study?

If we desire to teach, we must obtain his word. How do we do that?

Verse 25: Against what is the Lord warning Hyrum? How might one deny the spirit of revelation? What is the difference between the spirit of revelation and the spirit of prophecy?

Verse 26: The verb phrase “treasure up” doesn’t have an object. What do you think that object is?

Verses 28–29: Why is the testimony here important to Hyrum? Consider each element of this testimony: Christ is the Son of God; he was rejected by his own. Why do you think the Savior chose to use those two particular points as his testimony to Hyrum? How might they be significant to Hyrum in particular?

Verse 30: How do we receive Christ? What does it mean to become one of his children? If we are already the children of God, how do we become his children? (Another look at King Benjamin's sermon may be helpful here, especially Mosiah 5.)

Lesson 7

Various Scriptures on the First Principles and Ordinances of the Gospel

Faith

Doctrine and Covenants 19

Verse 23: What does the Savior mean when he commands us to learn of him? If we are familiar with the Gospels and 3 Nephi, then we have all the facts of his biography that are known. Presumably that isn't what he is commanding us to learn, so what *is* he commanding? Can the word *of* in “learn of me” meaning something other than “about”?

How do we listen to his words? How do we walk in the meekness of his Spirit? What does it mean to have peace in Christ?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 118: What does the phrase “words of wisdom” mean? How do we seek them diligently?

How are the commandment of this verse and the discussion of gifts in D&C 46 related to one another?

Is it significant that this phrase appears in the section that immediately precedes the section that we call the “Word of Wisdom”?

In the context of this section, to what does “the best books” refer? What does the revelation mean when it commands us to “seek learning, even by study and also by faith”? What does “study” mean in this case? How do we seek learning by faith?

2 Nephi 25

Verse 23: What are the two purposes for Nephi’s writing?

How is what Nephi says here related to what he says in 2 Nephi 10:20–25?

How does the Book of Mormon persuade us to believe in Christ? How does it persuade us to be reconciled to God?

What does it mean to be saved by grace? (Compare 2 Nephi 31:19, Mosiah 2:21, and Luke 17:7–10.) Why does Nephi’s point about being saved by grace follow his statement of his purposes for writing? Why make that point here?

We sometimes read this verse to say that first we do everything we can, then Christ makes up the difference between what we can do on our own and what is needed. However, to my knowledge, the scriptures don’t say anything like that anywhere else. (Look, for example, at the three scriptures mentioned in the previous paragraph.) Notice that when we read “after all we can do,” we read it as if it said “after *we have done* all we can do.” Do we change the meaning of the verse by unconsciously inserted those italicized words? Webster’s 1828 dictionary tells us that the phrase “after all” meant “when all is said and done.” Does that make it possible to understand this

verse in another way, or does it require us to stretch the meaning of these words too far?

Alma 32

Verse 27: Why must the Zoramites awake and arouse their faculties? Webster's dictionary of 1828 defines *faculty* as "that power of the mind or intellect which enables it to receive, revive, or modify perceptions. . . . The power of doing anything." Does that add any understanding to what Alma is saying?

In the same dictionary, "experiment" is defined as a "trial; an act or operation designed to discover some unknown truth." The *Oxford English Dictionary*, a historical dictionary, tells us that "experiment" first meant "an experience" and then came to mean "something ascertained by trial." Do we learn anything about what Alma is asking them to do if we substitute the older words: "arouse your faculties, even to an experience based on my words"? Does thinking about these older meanings of the word help us understand any better or differently what Alma was asking the Zoramites to do? What does he mean when he asks them to exercise "a particle of faith"? Is a desire to believe the same as a particle of faith? How so?

Repentance

Doctrine and Covenants 58

Verse 42: What does the Lord mean when he says that he remembers no more the sins of a repentant person? Does

it mean that he no longer knows that they occurred? Does it mean that he no longer remembers them as things that stain us, preventing us from being righteous, in other words, as sins?

Verse 43: Which sins need to be confessed to a Church authority and which sins need only to be confessed to the Lord? Why do we have to confess our sins in order to be repentant?

Consider the following definition: “Forsake: 1. to quit or leave entirely; to desert; to abandon” (Webster’s 1828). What does this tell us about our attempts to overcome particular sins? Is it significant that this scripture speaks of forsaking our sins in the plural? Does that suggest forsaking them one at a time or something else?

Baptism

Doctrine and Covenants 18

Verse 22: What does *saved* mean in this verse?

Why are only three requirements for salvation mentioned (repentance, baptism, endurance to the end)? Why aren’t obedience and ordinances mentioned?

If “endure to the end” means “continue to be obedient,” why does the Lord use endurance as a metaphor for obedience? Does endurance to the end mean something else?

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Verse 37: How does one humble himself before God? How do people “witness before the church that they have truly re-

pent of all their sins”? How do they witness that they “are willing to take upon them the name of Jesus Christ”? How do they show that they have “a determination to serve him to the end”? What works manifest “that they have received of the Spirit of Christ unto the remission of their sins”?

2 Nephi 2

Verse 6: This verse begins with *wherefore*, or “because.” Redemption comes through the Messiah *because* the law cuts us off. What does that mean? What does *redemption* mean in this context?

Why is the Savior referred to here as the Messiah rather than by one of his other names? Lehi, who consistently uses the word Messiah, tells us that redemption comes through the Messiah because he is full of grace and truth. How does that explain that redemption comes through him? What do *grace* and *truth* mean in this context?

Verse 7: What does the phrase “to answer the ends of the law” mean? *Ends* usually means “purposes.”

What is the image of a broken heart and why is it relevant? Why are “broken heart” and “contrite spirit” used as synonyms? Why can the sacrifice of the Messiah apply to no one but those who have a broken heart and a contrite spirit?

Why doesn’t Lehi mention obedience or ordinances?

Verse 8: Why does Lehi tell Jacob it is important to make these things known to everyone? Jacob is in the wilderness of a new land, without much chance to tell very many others this gospel.

Why is it that “no flesh . . . can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah”? What is his merit? His mercy? His grace?

Why does Lehi connect resurrection to redemption? We know that everyone will be resurrected, but only those who come to Christ with a broken heart and contrite spirit, or as it says here, relying on the merits and mercy and grace of Christ, will be able to enter into the presence of the Father.

Verse 9: Why is the Savior said to be the firstfruits? First fruit of what? Does this have anything to do with the fact that he is called the Firstborn?

Why do the scriptures so often reduce the requirements for salvation to belief in Christ?

The Gift of the Holy Ghost

Doctrine and Covenants 49

Verses 13–14: What kind of gift is the gift of the Holy Ghost? Why is it a gift rather than something we earn by having faith, repenting, and being baptized? What is the import of the ordinance being performed as a commandment, with the person receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost being told to *receive* it?

What is the power of the Holy Ghost? (See Bible Dictionary, “Holy Ghost,” p. 74.) Can you think of reasons that might explain why we confer the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands? What kinds of symbolism might be in that act?

Lesson 8

Joseph Smith—History 1:66–73;
Doctrine and Covenants 13; 20:38–67; 27:12–13;
84:6–30; 107:1–20; and 110:11–16

Aaronic Priesthood

Joseph Smith—History 1

Verse 68: The Father and the Son visited Joseph Smith in response to his soul-searching and his desire to know what church to join. John the Baptist visited him and Oliver Cowdery in response to their question about baptism by immersion. What does this suggest about revelation?

Verse 72: Why was it important that John the Baptist tell them who he was and what authority he operated under?

Doctrine and Covenants 13 (see also 84:26–27)

How does the use of the word *keys* here differ from its use in Matthew 16:19? How is it the same?

Numbers chapter 18 spells out the responsibilities of the Aaronic Priesthood anciently:

- They are to bear the sin of Israel and prevent others from getting too close to the tabernacle and its holy vessels (verses 1–5).

- As priesthood bearers, they are a gift to Israel, and they should understand their priesthood service as a gift they give to Israel (verses 6–7).
- Speaking to Aaron, the Lords says that he is in charge of the holy sacrifices and should depend on the Lord for his inheritance (verses 8–20; the same things are repeated in verses 21–32, speaking to the Levites as a whole).

Compare these responsibilities of the ancient Aaronic Priesthood with the responsibilities of the latter-day Aaronic Priesthood (D&C 20:46–59; 107:13–14, and 20). How is priesthood service a gift to give? What does authority mean when we think of it in those terms? How might priesthood bearers today understand the instruction to depend on the Lord for their inheritance?

What is the ministering of angels? Is it related to Jesus's experience after his forty-day fast (Matthew 4:11 and Mark 1:13)? Does the fact that it is a telestial privilege (D&C 76:88) help us understand what it means to us? Sherem confesses that angels minister as part of his repentance (Jacob 7:17); Amaleki lists it among the things in which he believes (Omni 1:25); when, after Christ's appearance, the disciplines receive the Holy Ghost, angels minister to them (3 Nephi 19:15); Moroni mentions the ministering of angels as something by which people have faith (Moroni 7:25), and he tells us that it is one of the gifts of the Spirit (Moroni 10:14). The fact that the ministering of angels is one of only two things mentioned by John the Baptist, the other being the gospel, suggests that it is something very

important. Can you explain specifically what it is in a way that gives it its importance? Where do we find the ministering of angels today?

John the Baptist describes the gospel in two ways: it is the gospel of repentance, and it is the gospel of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins. Why do you think he chooses those particular ways of describing the gospel, rather than others? John speaks of keys in the plural, but then he says, “*this* shall never be taken from the earth,” using a singular pronoun. To what does the word *this* refer? So what?

Doctrine and Covenants 107

Verse 14: What does the description of the Aaronic Priesthood as an appendage tell us? D&C 84:29–30 describes the offices of elder and bishop as appendages to the high priesthood and the offices of teacher and deacon as appendages to the lesser priesthood. Does that help us understand what it means to say that the Aaronic Priesthood is an appendage to the Melchizedek Priesthood?

To what does the phrase “outward ordinances” refer? Are there inward ordinances? What might be the difference between outward and inward ordinances? Why is the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost not an outward ordinance while baptism is?

Verse 20: What does this verse add that was not in the description of the Aaronic Priesthood that John the Baptist gave in his ordination of Joseph and Oliver?

What does “the letter of the gospel” mean?

Why does this verse end with “agreeable to the covenants and commandments”? “Covenants and Commandments” was the title of the second half of the first edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. Does that answer the question, or does the phrase mean more?

Melchizedek Priesthood

Doctrine and Covenants 84

Verse 17: What does it mean to say that the Melchizedek Priesthood continues “in the church of God in all generations”? Is that the same as being “without beginning of days or end of years,” or are the two different?

Verse 19: What does it mean to say that the Melchizedek Priesthood administers the gospel? How does that differ from the responsibility of the Aaronic Priesthood? What does it mean to say that the greater priesthood holds the key to the mysteries of the kingdom? In what sense does it hold that key? What do you make of the fact that this verse makes “mysteries of the kingdom” and “knowledge of God” equivalent? Are we to understand “knowledge of God” to mean “God’s knowledge” or “our knowledge of him”?

Verse 20: The verse begins with the word *therefore*. How does the previous verse lead us to the conclusion stated in this verse?

How do the ordinances of the gospel manifest the power of godliness? Is “the power of godliness” different from “the power of God”? If so, how? Can you explain specifically how, say, baptism manifests the power of godliness?

Verse 21: What does it mean to say that without the ordinances, which are only possible through the authority of the priesthood, “the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh”? That is a very strong claim about the function of ordinances for human beings. Can you explain it? What is godliness that it cannot be manifest without authoritative ordinances?

Verse 22: To what does the word *this* refer, to “the power of godliness” or to something else?

Doctrine and Covenants 107

Verse 8: What does it mean to hold the right of presidency? Which presidency is intended here? Or is this referring to a general right, the right to preside? Does verse 9 answer that question, or does it speak of something else?

What are “spiritual things”?

Verses 18–19: Why is the power and authority of the priesthood a matter of holding keys? Does that differ from our ordinary ways of understanding power and authority? If so, how? What does it mean to hold the key to blessings rather than to hold the key to doing something? Why does verse 18 speak of *spiritual* blessings rather than merely blessings?

What does it mean to have the heavens opened to one? What does it mean to “*commune* with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn” (*italics added*)? The phrase “general assembly and church of the firstborn” comes from Hebrews 12:23. Does its use in Hebrews help us understand better what it means here?

D&C 76:67 equates the church of the Firstborn with the church of Enoch. What might that teach us? Verse 71 of the same section says that the church of the Firstborn consists of those who have received the fulness of the Father, and verse 94 says that it is composed of those who dwell in his presence. Does that mean that there is no such church on the earth today? If so, how do you explain D&C 78:21, where the Lord tells the members of the Church, “Ye are the church of the Firstborn”? D&C 76:51–60 describes the church of the Firstborn quite fully.

Notice that all of the pronouns in D&C 76:51–60 are either plural or masculine. Does this mean that the promises in verses 57–60 are offered only to men? What evidence is there to the contrary (such as the temple ordinances)? Where do women fit in the understanding of things explained here?

What does it mean to “enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father, and Jesus”? How is that related to the statement that the power and authority of the Melchizedek Priesthood is “to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn”?

Why is it important in this context that Jesus be remembered as “the mediator of the new covenant”? Writing about the verses in section 76, Bruce R. McConkie said, “Baptism is the gate to the Church itself, but celestial marriage is the gate to membership in the Church of the First-born, the inner circle of faithful Saints who are heirs of exaltation and the fulness of the Father’s kingdom” (*Mormon Doctrine*

2nd ed., p. 139). How does Elder McConkie understand the communion of the church of the Firstborn?

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Are each of the things listed here *spiritual* things? Can you explain your answer?

Verses 41, 43: What reasons might there be for why the gift of the Holy Ghost is conferred by the laying on of hands?

What is “the baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost”? Is it the same as the gift of the Holy Ghost? Answering President Martin Van Buren’s question about how Mormonism differs from other religions, Joseph Smith said that we differ “in the mode of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost. We consider that all other considerations are contained in the gift of the Holy Ghost” (*History of the Church*, 4:42). How can this be? What does it mean to *conduct* meetings—rather than to *preach*—as one is led by the Holy Ghost?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 9

Doctrine and Covenants 20:1–36, 68–69,
75–79; 21; 27; and 115:1–4

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Verse 2: Why is Joseph called the first elder?

Verse 3: Why is Oliver called the second elder?

Verse 4: To what does the word *this* refer in the first phrase of this verse?

What does it mean to say that something is “according to the grace of our Lord”?

What does the phrase “to whom be all glory, both now and forever” mean? What does that phrase tell us?

Verses 5–12: Notice that this is one long sentence. What is this sentence as a whole about? Deciding what the subject (or subjects) of the sentence is may help you understand better what the sentence says.

Verse 5: What does it mean to receive a remission of sin?

How do we get entangled in the vanities of the world? What does “vanities of the world” mean?

Verse 6: Do we know to what angelic visitation this verse refers?

Verse 7: How can commandments inspire us?

Verse 8: We probably all know what “power from on high” means. And we all know what it means to translate the Book of Mormon. But what does it mean that Joseph was given power to translate “by the means which were before prepared”?

Verse 10: When this verse says the Book of Mormon was given by inspiration, is it referring to the inspiration the Lord gave the Book of Mormon prophets or to the inspiration he gave Joseph Smith?

When the verse says the Book of Mormon “is confirmed to others by the ministering of angels,” of whom is it speaking?

Who is it that declares the Book of Mormon to the world?

Verse 11: *What* proves to the world that the scriptures are true? Is this verse referring to the Book of Mormon? To Joseph’s experience with repentance? To the commandments that inspired him? How might each of these possibilities prove that the scriptures are true?

Verse 12: This verse tells us that something mentioned in the sentence (verses 5–12) shows the Lord is the same God yesterday, today, and forever. What shows us that?

Verse 13: The world will be judged by the great witnesses it has, witnesses that have been mentioned. Who are those witnesses? (Does the last phrase of the verse help us?)

To what does “this work” refer? To the restoration of the Church? To the Book of Mormon? To the testimony of witnesses? To something else?

Verses 14–15: Those who receive it and work righteousness will receive a crown. Those who don't receive it will be condemned. What is "it"?

Verse 16: What has God spoken?

Verse 17: By what things do they know there is a God in heaven?

Verses 17–19: How do the things they have seen and heard testify not only of God's existence but that he is the Creator of the world and of human beings, that we are made in his image, and that he gave commandments for us to love and serve him and to worship only him?

Verse 20: Transgression of the laws (commandments) mentioned in verse 19 caused the fall. Specifically, which of the laws mentioned were transgressed? How so?

Verse 21: The word *wherefore* means something like "because of this." Because of what?

Verse 22: What does it mean to *suffer* temptation, if he gave it no heed?

Verses 23–26: Here is another long and complex sentence. What is it about?

Verses 23–24: Why is this important for us to know?

Verse 25: Why aren't ordinances or good works mentioned in this verse?

Verses 26–27: To be saved, those who came before Christ must have believed in the words of the prophets, spoken as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Those who come after

must believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost. How are these two the same? What is the difference?

Verse 28: What does it mean to say that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God?

What does it mean to say that God is infinite? Eternal? What does it mean to say that God is without end? (Is there a difference?)

Verse 29: What does it mean to repent? (Look up the word in a dictionary.)

What does it mean to believe on Jesus's name?

What is worship? (Again, looking up the word *worship* may give some new ideas.)

What does it mean to endure to the end? What does it mean to endure in faith?

Verse 30: What is justification? How can it be just and true? What does it mean to say that it is? How does justification occur through grace?

Verse 31: What is sanctification? How can it be just and true? What does it mean to say that it is? How does sanctification occur through grace?

Why does the phrase "to all those who love and serve God with all their mights, minds, and strength" occur at the end of this verse and not at the end of verse 30?

Verse 32: What does it mean to fall from grace? What does it mean to be *in* grace?

How do we depart from God?

Verse 33: What does the phrase “fall into temptation” mean? Did Jesus fall into temptation? (Look back at verse 22.) What should we pray for to avoid falling into temptation? Of what should we take heed?

Verse 34: Those who are sanctified have to take heed as well. Who might that be? That the sanctified *also* have to take heed seems to indicate that verses 32 and 33 are primarily about those who are not sanctified. Who are they? Why are those verses primarily about them, and then also about the sanctified?

Verse 35: What are “these things”? In other words, this verse is a testimony of something—what? How is the Revelation of John relevant here?

Verse 36: What has the Lord spoken? How do we render honor to his name? Power? Glory? Is this a repetition, for effect, of the same idea three times, or are these three distinct things? What difference will it make either way?

Verse 68: What does this verse tell us about missionary work?

Verse 69: What is a godly walk? A godly conversation? (Look *conversation* up in a dictionary that tells the older meanings of words. You may be surprised at what it used to mean.)

How can our works and faith be agreeable to holy scripture? What does that mean?

How do we walk in holiness before the Lord? Why do you think the metaphor of walk is used so much to describe our life in the Church?

Verses 75–79: Since the sacrament prayers are given in the Book of Mormon, why are they repeated here? Why do the sacrament prayers follow immediately after the discussion of baptism?

We hear the sacrament prayers every week, but they are worth reviewing. Compare the sacrament prayers to see if there are things we might not be noticing.

Blessing on the Bread

O God, the Eternal Father,
we ask thee in the name
of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to
bless and sanctify this bread
to the souls of all those who
partake of it;

Blessing on the Water

O God, the Eternal Father,
we ask thee in the name
of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to
bless and sanctify this wine
to the souls of all those who
drink of it,

What does the phrase “bless and sanctify” mean? Is there a difference between blessing something and sanctifying it? Does this have anything to do with verses 30 and 31 of this section?

What does it mean to bless and sanctify something “to the souls” of those who eat or drink it? Why might the blessing on the bread use *partake* instead of “eat”?

Blessing on the Bread

that they may eat in remem-
brance of the body of thy
Son, and witness unto thee,

Blessing on the Water

that they may do it in re-
membrance of the blood of
thy Son, which was shed for
them; that they may witness
unto thee, O God, the Eter-
nal Father,

What does it mean to eat or drink in remembrance of something? Why might the prayer on the water include the description of the blood (“which was shed for them”) when the prayer on the bread refers to the body but doesn’t say something like “which was broken for them”? What might “which was shed for them” add?

Why might the prayer on the water address the Father again?

Blessing on the Bread

that they are willing to take
upon them the name of thy
Son, and always remember
him, and keep his com-
mandments which he hath
given them,

Blessing on the Water

that they do always remem-
ber him,

The prayer on the water prays only that those drinking it will remember Jesus; the prayer on the bread prays also that they will take his name on them and keep his commandments. Why that difference? What does “remember him” include? Does it, perhaps, include taking his name and keeping his commandments?

Blessing on the Bread

that they may always have
his Spirit to be with them.
Amen.

Blessing on the Water

that they may have his Spirit
to be with them. Amen.

Why might one prayer use *always* and the other not?

Does the fact that one of these prayers is always said before the other explain any of the differences between them? How?

Doctrine and Covenants 21

Verse 1: To what record is the Lord referring?

Verse 2: In what way was Joseph Smith “inspired by the Holy Ghost to lay the foundation” of the Church? Wasn’t he commanded by the Father to do so?

Verses 4–5: What does it mean to heed something? How is that different from listening to it?

Why are we admonished to receive his word “in all patience and faith”?

Verse 8: Why would Joseph have been weeping for Zion? Since the concept of Zion has not yet been clarified, either by the Book of Mormon or by further revelation, for what was Joseph weeping?

Verse 9: Is the blessing promised in this verse that those who work in the vineyard will believe?

Verse 11: To what does “This being an ordinance unto you” refer?

Doctrine and Covenants 27

Verses 2–4: Why do we use water in the sacrament? What else could we use?

Verses 5ff.: What do these verses describe?

Verse 5: What is Moroni’s particular authority?

Verse 6: Who is Elias? Elias is the Greek form of the name Elijah, so the two names mean the same (like Matthew, in English, and Matthieu, in French). But there are scriptural texts in which Elias and Elijah are differentiated, such as in Matthew 17:12–13, where Jesus calls John the Baptist “Elias.”

Verse 7: Who is John the son of Zacharias? Why would he be one of those to be at this gathering?

Verses 8–9: We are aware that Elijah’s mission is to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. We understand genealogical work and work for the dead to be that mission. But does that work include anything more? Review, for example, D&C 2:2. What promises have been made that must be remembered? How does the Book of Mormon fit into this mission?

Verse 13: Why were Peter, James, and John given the keys of the kingdom?

What does it mean that they were given “a dispensation of the gospel for the last times”? What is the literal rather than the doctrinal meaning of *dispensation*? Does that help us understand this verse?

What does it mean to gather all things together in one?

Verses 15–18: Notice that we must have the things described here if we are to be able to stand at the last days. What does the phrase “gird up you loins” mean? Why would truth be the thing we would gird our loins with?

Why is righteousness a breastplate?

What is “the preparation of the gospel of peace”? What would it mean to have that preparation for shoes?

Why is faith a shield? How does it give us power to “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”?

In what sense is salvation a helmet? In what sense is the Spirit a sword?

What is “my word which I shall reveal unto you”?

What does it mean to “be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me”?

Must we all pray for the same things?

Lesson 10

Doctrine and Covenants 25

Verse 1: Christ is speaking here, rather than the Father. Why is it important for us to become his son or daughter rather than to be his brother or sister?

He tells us that we become sons and daughters by receiving his gospel. How do we that? (Compare Mosiah 5:7.)

Verse 2: What were Emma Smith's circumstances at this time and later? What meaning might the promise that her life would be preserved have had for her when she received this revelation? What meaning might it have had later in her life?

When we speak of someone being faithful in a nongospel context, what do we mean? Do we mean the same thing when we are speaking of faithfulness to God? Does *faithful* in this context mean the same as "endure to the end"? How so, or why not?

What does the word *Zion* mean as it is used here? What does it mean to have an inheritance in Zion?

Verse 3: What does it mean to be elect? Webster's 1828 dictionary says that the principle meaning is "one chosen or set apart." What does that tell us about what the Lord is telling Emma?

Verse 4: Why might Emma have murmured? What things had Emma not seen?

Verses 5–11: What specific things is Emma told to do? Make a list. What might those tell us about the roles of other women? Where they seem to be the same as our cultural expectations, how do we understand that sameness? Are there any differences from those expectations? What do we make of those differences?

It appears that Emma is being prepared to take Oliver Cowdery's place (though she did not). What do we make of that?

Verse 5: What would it have meant for Emma to be a comfort to her husband? Webster's 1828 dictionary gives these meanings for the word: "to strengthen; to invigorate; to cheer or enliven," "to strengthen the mind when depressed or enfeebled; to console," and "in *law*, to relieve, assist, or encourage." Contemporary dictionaries tell us that "console" is the first meaning rather than "to strengthen," so there has been a shift in meaning since the time of this revelation. How does thinking about that shift in meaning help you understand better what the Lord is admonishing Emma to do for Joseph?

When the Lord tells Emma that she should comfort him "in the spirit of meekness" what is he telling her? Looking at how the scriptures use the word *meekness* should help answer that question. (See for example Colossians 3:12.)

Verse 6: Why was Emma commanded to travel with Joseph? She had already served as a scribe for Joseph sometimes. What is the point of this commandment to do so?

Verse 7: What did *ordained* mean at the time of this revelation? You may find interesting what President John Taylor said about Emma's ordination and the ordination of the

other members of the Relief Society presidency (see *Journal of Discourses*, 21:367–68).

Verse 8: What do you make of this promise that Emma would receive the Holy Ghost? She had already been baptized. What does this verse suggest about her confirmation? Had she put off confirmation, and if so, why?

Why do you think she was told that her time would be “given to writing, and to learning much”?

Verse 9: What fears might the Lord be calming here? What particular fears might Emma have had? How is this an answer to those fears?

Verse 10: The commandment of this verse is a common thread in the revelations that we have in the Doctrine and Covenants. Why do you think the Lord felt it necessary to repeat some form of that commandment so often? What circumstances in the early Church warranted that repetition?

Verse 11: The word *hymn* originally meant “a song of praise to God.” Some of our hymns today may not fit that description exactly, but most can be construed as praising God. Why is praise of him so important to our spiritual life? What does this suggest about refraining from singing in church?

Verse 12: What is “the song of the heart”? Is it the same as or different from “hymn”?

In what sense is a song of the heart a prayer? Why would a prayer that is always the same, as is a hymn, be important to the Lord? How might it be important to us?

What blessing or blessings do we receive from singing hymns?

Verse 13: The Lord seems to be saying, “For these reasons, lift up your heart and rejoice.” What reasons has he given her for doing so in this revelation?

What does it mean to *cleave* to a covenant?

Verse 14: How does this reference to meekness help us understand what the Lord said in verse 5?

The Old Testament term most often translated as “glory” originally referred to weightiness or importance. Because those who were important dressed in splendor, it came also to refer to shining, as in Exodus 24:17. D&C 133:49 speaks of glory in similar terms. But D&C 132:19 speaks of glory as “a fulness and continuation of the seeds forever and ever.” In a gospel context, what is glory? Is there more than one meaning or are these meanings closely related? Do the meanings of the word *glory* help us understand anything about the promises that God makes to the faithful?

Is the commandment to delight in the glory of another person, particularly in a spouse, something that applies only to Emma or only to women? What do the scriptures say about seeking glory for ourselves? (See John 8:50.) In practical terms, what does it mean to delight in the glory of one’s spouse?

Verse 15: How do we keep the commandments continually? What does *crown* mean here? What is the Lord promising Emma?

Verse 16: Does this mean that the revelation we have here is a revelation not only for Emma, but also for every other member of the Church? If so, how might that change our understanding of its parts?

Lesson 11

Doctrine and Covenants 4; 11–12; 14–18;
31; 33; and 75

Since most of the other sections for this lesson repeat what we find in section 4, I will focus my questions on it.

Doctrine and Covenants 4

Verse 1: What is the marvelous work that is *about* to come forth? The use of the word *about* suggests that, at the time this revelation was given (February 1829), it had not yet come forth. When do you think it either did or will?

Notice that this verse is repeated in D&C 6:1, 11:1, 12:1, and 14:1, and it is paraphrased in D&C 18:44. It also appears in the JST version of Isaiah 29:26 (Isaiah 29:14 KJV), and it occurs regularly in the Book of Mormon (eight times). What does the word *marvelous* mean in this context?

Verse 2: The literal meaning of *embark* is “to get on board [a ship].” What does that word suggest here?

The phrase “heart, might, mind, and strength” occurs only here. But other combinations of these words are frequent. See, for example, Deuteronomy 6:5; 28:65; 1 Samuel 2:35; 2 Kings 23:25; 1 Chronicles 28:9; Job 9:4; Psalms 38:10; 73:26; 84:5; Daniel 5:20; Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30, 33; Luke 10:27; 2 Nephi 1:21; Mosiah 7:33; and Ether 4:15.

Does looking at other uses of the phrase suggest anything about how to understand it here?

Verse 3: Why is having the desire to serve God enough to make us called to the work? To what does “the work” refer here?

Verse 4: Why is the work of the gospel often compared to reaping a field? How does the image in this section compare to other, related images in the scriptures? For example, how does it compare to the parable of the sower (Mark 4:3–8) or the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26–29)?

What does *salvation* mean in this verse?

D&C 88:15 says that the spirit and the body of man are the soul. Is that the definition that applies here? If so, what does this verse promise?

Verse 5: Why does this verse speak of both charity and love? In other scriptures, don’t the two mean the same? Are they distinct things here, or is the Lord repeating the same thing in different ways to emphasize it?

What does it mean to have one’s eye single to the glory of God? When is my eye not single to his glory? Compare this qualification with the promise made in D&C 88:67. What does the word *single* mean in this context? Compare this to Matthew 6:22 (Luke 11:34), where the Lord says that if our eye is single, then our whole body will be filled with light. Does *single* mean the same in both cases?

The Greek word translated “single” in the New Testament could also be translated either “healthy” or “pure,” but it is difficult to understand what “pure to the glory of God” or

“healthy to the glory of God” might mean. Does that mean that the passage in Matthew is irrelevant to explaining the meaning of this verse?

Does Mormon 8:15 give us a definition of what “eye single to the glory of God” means, or does it give us an example of what it means?

Verse 6: Why do you think the Doctrine and Covenants implicitly refers to these verses in 2 Peter 1:5–9 so often? Look at this comparison of the two lists:

2 Peter

Faith
Knowledge
Temperance
Patience
Godliness
Brotherly kindness
Charity

D&C 4

Faith
Virtue
Knowledge
Temperance
Patience
Brotherly kindness
Godliness
Charity
Humility
Diligence

What does that comparison tell us about the qualifications for the work and about the goal of the work? Do you see any significance in the change of order (*brotherly kindness* and *godliness* are reversed)?

Why might *humility* and *diligence* have been added in the Doctrine and Covenants revelation?

Here are some alternate translations of the Greek words of 2 Peter:

virtue = excellence

knowledge = knowledge of what really is

temperance = self-discipline

patience = steadfastness, endurance

godliness = holiness, piety

brotherly kindness = brotherly love

charity = love, good will

Are any of these meanings also helpful in understanding the admonition of the Doctrine and Covenants?

Verse 7: How do you square this verse with the fact that all of us have had the experience of asking and not receiving what we asked for?

What does it mean to knock and to have *it* opened? In other words, what is promised and how do we obtain that promise?

The word *amen* means something like “so let it be” and signifies agreement. Why does a revelation from the Lord end with that word?

Lesson 12

Articles of Faith 1:10; Doctrine and Covenants
29:1–8; 33:3–7; 37; 38:24–41; 52:2–5, 42–43;
57:1–3; and 110:11

Article of Faith 10

What is the gathering? Who is gathered? How does the gathering occur and when did it begin? Why is the gathering important?

Why is the last part of the article of faith—about the renewal of the earth—included in the article of faith concerning the gathering of Israel?

Doctrine and Covenants 29

Verse 1: The word *atone* is an interesting English word, coming into English rather late (late sixteenth century), when it replaced the earlier verb “to one,” in other words, “to join or unite.” (But “to one” is also not particularly old, first showing up in the fourteenth century.) In the King James Version of the Old Testament, the word *atonement* usually translates the Hebrew word *kaphar*, also translated “reconciliation,” “pacification,” “mercy,” “purging,” “cleansing,” and so on. In the New Testament (where the word occurs only once—Romans 5:11) it translates the Greek word *katallage*: “reconciliation,” “exchange.” Do these other

words give you new ways of thinking about the Atonement and what it accomplishes?

Usually the Lord uses the word *arm* in relation to strength: “strong arm,” as in Psalm 89:10 and Jeremiah 21:25. (See also 1 Kings 8:42, which uses an oft-used phrase, “strong hand . . . stretched out arm.”) What does his use of *arm* to indicate mercy instead of strength suggest?

Verse 2: How does the metaphor of this verse compare to that of the previous verse?

What does it mean, in this context, to call on the Lord in mighty prayer?

Verse 4: What does it mean to be chosen “out of the world”? How does that occur?

Verse 5: What does it mean to say that Christ is in our midst? How is that related to the gathering?

How is the fact that he is our advocate with the Father relevant *here*? The Latin roots of *advocate* are suggestive: *ad* (“to”) + *vocare* (“call”). An advocate is one who has been called to speak for someone; it used to mean “defense lawyer,” the one who stands opposed to the prosecutor, the adversary. Why does the Lord describe himself as an advocate?

Is Jesus’s advocacy on our behalf related to the Father’s gift of the kingdom? If so, what does it mean to say that giving us that kingdom is the Father’s good will?

Verse 6: Notice how this verse differs from the same idea expressed in many other scriptures by adding “being united in prayer according to my command.” What is the significance

of that addition? Where are we commanded to be united in prayer? What does it mean to be united in prayer?

What do you make of the fact that the Lord's prayer is in the plural (namely, *our* Father), but appears to be something intended to be said on one's own?

Verse 7: To whom is this addressed? In other words, who is called to bring to pass the gathering?

Does this verse define what it means to be elect?

Verse 8: At the time of this revelation, the gathering was to a particular location. Now it is to any of the stakes. How does that difference change our understanding of what it means to gather together?

The gathering is "to prepare their hearts." How does the gathering do that? It is also "to . . . be prepared in all things against" the day of tribulation. What is that day? How does the gathering prepare us for it?

Doctrine and Covenants 33

Verses 3–4: If the field is white, in other words, ripe for harvest (verse 3), how can it also be that the vineyard has become completely corrupted (verse 4)?

Does *they* refer to the few who do good?

To whom does *all* refer? Everyone living, all priests, someone or something else?

Verse 5: What does it mean to say that the Church has been "called forth out of the wilderness"? The reference seems

to be to the story of Moses and Israel. How is that story relevant? Are Revelation 12:6 and 14 relevant here?

Doctrine and Covenants 38

Verses 24–25: What does it mean to value (esteem) another as oneself?

What does it mean to practice virtue and holiness? Why does the Lord add “before me” to “practice virtue and holiness”?

Verse 26: What is the point of this parable?

Verse 27: What does a parable about the equality of God’s mercy and gifts have to do with the need for our unity?

Verses 29–31: Of what is the Lord warning in verse 29?

How would “the wickedness of men reveal these things unto you by their wickedness”?

Verse 38: What *things* was the Lord speaking of that needed to be preserved? How might this commandment to preserve all things apply to us today?

What are the things that will be “gathered unto the bosom of the church”?

Verse 39: To what riches is the Lord referring here? How would you decide whether those riches are material or spiritual or both?

Doctrine and Covenants 52

Verse 2: Why is it important that the people of the Church are “a remnant of Jacob”? (See scriptures such as 3 Nephi 21:12 and 22–23.) To what covenant are the remnant heirs?

Verse 43: The Lord said “I . . . will hasten the city in its time.” What does that mean?

Given this promise and similar ones, what do you make of the fact that the city of Zion was *not* established in Missouri?

What does it mean to be crowned with joy and with rejoicing? What does that crowning have to do with the gathering of Israel and the establishment of the city of Zion?

Doctrine and Covenants 110

Verse 11: Why did Moses have the keys for the gathering of Israel? What does that gathering have to do with his role as the prophet who led the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt, but not into the promised land?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 13

2 Nephi 3:11–15; Doctrine and Covenants
5:10; 84:19–25; 88:15–24; 93:29;
107:23, 33, 35; 124:37–42; 128:16–18;
and 130:22; Moses 1:40–41

Doctrine and Covenants 5

Verse 10: What does “this generation” mean? What does *word* mean in this context?

Moses 1

Verse 41: Is the meaning of *words* here the same as that of *word* in D&C 5:10? Is the Lord speaking of a time when actual words will be removed from the Bible, or of the loss of his teachings, whether that involves removing words or just losing the understanding of them?

We usually compare Brigham Young to Moses, but here the Lord compares Joseph Smith to Moses. How was Joseph Smith like Moses, and Oliver Cowdery like Aaron? (See other scriptures where this comparison is made, such as D&C 28:2–3.)

Why are the words had only “among as many as shall believe”?

2 Nephi 3

Verse 11: Why is Joseph Smith here described as a seer rather than a prophet? (How do the two differ, or do they?)

How did Joseph Smith bring forth the Lord's word to the descendants of Joseph (Lehi's son)?

Verse 12: Lehi says that the writings of Judah and those of his descendants "shall grow together." What does that metaphor mean? What does it tell us about the relation of the Bible and the Book of Mormon? How will they, together, confound false doctrine, rid us of contention, and establish fruit among the descendants of Joseph (Lehi's son)?

In Nauvoo, Joseph Smith said this about the parable of the mustard seed: "The Kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. the mustard seed is small but brings forth a large tree, and the fowls lodge in the branches The fowls are the Angels, the Book of Mormon perhaps" (*The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 10). Does that metaphor cause us to think about the Book of Mormon differently than does Lehi's metaphor? If so, what do we learn from each?

Verse 15: How is the Prophet Joseph Smith like Joseph in Egypt? How did the ancient Joseph bring the Lord's people salvation, and how is that like what modern Joseph did?

Doctrine and Covenants 84

Verse 19: What does it mean that the Melchizedek Priesthood holds the key of the mysteries of the kingdom? (Notice that "mysteries of the kingdom" is equivalent to "knowledge of God" in these verses.)

Verses 20–21: What does it mean that the power of godliness is present in the ordinances? What does “the power of godliness” mean?

Why does verse 20 begin with the word *therefore*?

Verse 22: To what does the word *this* refer? To the priesthood? To the ordinances? To the power of godliness?

Verses 23–25: How does removing the priesthood from the children of Israel remove them from the Lord’s rest, the fulness of his glory? What does “the Lord’s rest” or “the fulness of his glory” mean?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 15: This is an important doctrine, for traditional Christianity has almost always denigrated the body, and because of that denigration our culture still often looks on the body as a hindrance (or, in backlash, it thinks of the body as the only thing). The privilege and acclaim we sometimes give supposedly intellectual professions over more physical professions is one of the remnants of this misunderstanding of the body and the spirit. In what other ways do we sometimes forget this necessary unity of spirit and body?

Note: though *soul* is defined here as the unity of the spirit and body, it isn’t always or even often used that way in other scriptures. This definition is one that seems to have been saved for the latter days. Therefore, when you read the word *soul* in scripture, you must ask yourself whether the writer meant *spirit* or *soul* as it is used here.

Verses 21–22: We sometimes speak of being sanctified through obedience to law, but verse 21 speaks of being sanctified *through* the law. Is that any different? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Notice too that these verses speak of abiding a law rather than obeying a law. The word *abide* means “dwell.” Why do you suppose the Lord would speak of abiding a law rather than obeying a law?

Doctrine and Covenants 107

Verse 23: What does it mean to be a witness of the *name* of Christ? What does it mean to be a *special* witness of that name? Which authorities are special witnesses of Christ?

Verses 33–35: How do these verses clarify the relations between the three presiding quorums of the Church?

What does it mean to say that the Presidency and the Seventy should build up and regulate all the affairs of the Church “first unto the Gentiles and secondly unto the Jews” (verses 33–34)?

What does it mean to us that the gospel is to be proclaimed by the Twelve “first unto the Gentiles and then unto the Jews”?

Doctrine and Covenants 124

Verses 37–39: What do these verses teach us about the purposes of temples?

Verse 40: What does it mean to build a house to the name of the Lord? Why must it be built to his name if he is to reveal his ordinances therein?

Verse 41: What is the significance of the promise made in this verse?

Compare this verse with verse 38. What is the same in each? What does that say about temple ordinances?

Doctrine and Covenants 128

Verse 17: The earliest quotation of this scripture is in Malachi 4:6. There, as here, the word *heart* is singular. The scripture is also referred to in 3 Nephi 25:6, where *heart* is also singular: “the heart of the fathers.” What might “the heart of the fathers” mean? On the other hand, in Luke 1:17 and D&C 27:9, 98:16, and 110:15, the quotation is plural: “the *hearts* of the fathers.” To what might that refer? Does this difference help us understand anything or is it just an irrelevant fact?

Verse 18: There must be a welding link between the fathers and the children or the earth will be cursed. Given what we’ve seen in previous lessons about binding, records, priesthood, etc., what might one say about the nature of that welding link? If we understand the nature of that welding link, what might that say about our relations to our children and our parents? To our history? To our culture?

Doctrine and Covenants 130

Verse 22: Why do you think this verse emphasizes the tangibility of the Father’s body rather than, perhaps, its visibility?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 14

Doctrine and Covenants 42:30–42; 51;
78; 82; and 104:11–18

Doctrine and Covenants 42

Verses 30–31: In speaking of consecrating our substance “with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken,” verse 30 clearly has reference to the law of consecration. We do not presently practice that law in the way it was to be practiced in the nineteenth century, but we are not free from that law. What does this verse mean to contemporary Latter-day Saints?

What does the word *consecrate* mean? How do we consecrate something? How do we consecrate our properties to support the poor? To whom do we make such consecrations?

Verse 42: The idea of “idle poor” seems to have had a relatively recent development, though it is in light of that idea that we usually read this verse: there are those who live on the dole by choice. That is an idea that comes into being in the twentieth century, primarily because in previous times it was nearly impossible for a poor person to be idle and survive. But if this verse doesn’t refer to the idle poor (as we think of them), to whom does it refer? In the early nineteenth century and in earlier times, what kinds of people would have been idle? How might we “translate”

the meaning of this scripture for our own understanding and circumstances? (For a warning to the poor, see D&C 56:17.)

Doctrine and Covenants 51

Verse 9: What does “be alike” mean here? What might it mean to us today?

What does honesty have to do with being alike? What do honesty and being alike have to do with being one?

Verse 13: Are we still under the obligation to consecrate that which we have that is more than we need? How much is more than is needful? Who decides? Consider this from President Kimball:

Consecration is the giving of one’s time, talents, and means to care for those in need—whether spiritually or temporally—and in building the Lord’s kingdom. In Welfare Services, members consecrate as they labor on production projects, donate materials to Deseret Industries, share their professional talents, give a generous fast offering, and respond to ward and quorum service projects. They consecrate their time in their home or visiting teaching. We consecrate when we give of ourselves. (*Ensign*, August 1984, p. 4)

Verse 15: Why is it a *privilege* to be organized according to the laws of consecration?

Verse 19: In the context of this section, what does it mean to be “a faithful, a just, and a wise steward”? (Compare

D&C 78:22.) How is a steward different from an owner? What implications does that have for our lives?

Doctrine and Covenants 78

Verse 3: Why had the time come to establish a storehouse for the poor? What were the historical circumstances that made that necessary? What were the spiritual circumstances? Do verses 4–5 explain why it was necessary?

Verses 5–6: Why is equality in both heavenly and earthly things necessary if we wish to obtain heavenly things?

Why does inequality in earthly things prevent us from equally obtaining heavenly things?

Verses 11–12: How seriously does the Lord take the covenant that establishes the order of this storehouse? What does that say to us about our responsibilities to the poor?

Verses 14–15: According to these verses, what are the goals of caring for the poor?

Verses 17–18: What does the Lord mean when he says the Saints are as little children? These verses mention two attributes of children, the inability to understand the blessings prepared and the inability to bear all things. How do they apply to us? Does Matthew 18:1–6 tell us anything about our attitudes toward each other, given what the Lord says here?

Verse 19: What does it mean to be made glorious? To what might the Lord be referring? Why is thankfulness so essential to being made glorious?

Verse 22: What is the significance of this promise in the context of this particular revelation?

Doctrine and Covenants 82

Verse 1: Why might this section, which was given at the organization of the First Presidency, begin with an admonition to forgive?

Verse 3: We sometimes misquote this verse, saying, “unto whom much is given, much is expected.” Instead of *expected*, the Lord says *required*. What does it mean to have much required?

Verse 7: Compare this verse to James 2:10. How would you explain this teaching to your children? To an investigator?

Verse 10: In the Doctrine and Covenants, the word *bound* has at least two uses: as a synonym of “sealed,” joined by covenant; and as a description of what happens to Satan at the end, as a synonym of “tied up.” In this section, binding is mentioned three times, in this verse, in verse 11, and in verse 15. In the second two cases, it clearly means “sealed by covenant.” It seems reasonable to assume that’s what it means here too, especially given the explicit connection of *bound* and *promise* in this verse. We sometimes hear people using this verse to discuss “binding God,” in other words, putting ourselves in a position where we force him to do what we want, but that seems fairly clearly to be a misunderstanding of the verse. The point is that he binds himself to us by covenant when we obey him, not that when we obey him we have power over him, as he will have power

over Satan. How does this verse figure into the law of consecration?

Verse 22: What is this verse advising? It is a quotation of Luke 16:9 (a verse in one of the most difficult parables). How does it fit with the instruction that we cannot serve both God and mammon (Matthew 6:24; Luke 16:3; and 3 Nephi 13:24)?

Verse 23: As used in the scriptures, the word *judgment* usually means “condemnation.” How do we avoid condemning others?

Doctrine and Covenants 104

Verse 11: What does this verse mean to us today, given that we are not presently required to live the law of consecration as it was organized by the Church in the nineteenth century?

Verse 13: What are our stewardships and how do we account for them?

Verse 16: We must provide for the poor in the Lord’s way. What is that way as he describes it here?

What does it mean to exalt the poor and make the rich low?

Verse 17: Why does this verse begin with the word *for*?

What does it mean that there is enough of the earth’s fulness to spare? To spare for what? Does this mean that we can deal with the natural resources of the earth willy-nilly, as if it doesn’t matter what we do with them? If not, why not?

If there is enough in the earth to spare, why are so many people impoverished?

How do we decide when we have imparted enough of our portion of the Lord's abundance to the poor?

Verse 18: This verse makes it obvious that we must impart our portion to the poor. How do we decide what that portion is?

Lesson 15

Doctrine and Covenants 46

Verse 1: Why do you think that this revelation begins with an announcement that it is for our profit and learning? Are there revelations that are *not* for our profit and learning? It seems not, so what is the point of drawing that to our attention here?

Verse 2: In your own words, what does this mean? What does it suggest about handbooks, lesson manuals, and even scriptures? What does this verse teach about leaders' responsibilities?

Verse 3: To what does “your public meetings” refer? Why is it important that no one be excluded from our public meetings?

Verse 4: Logically, if no one can be cast out of our public meetings and sacrament meeting is a public meeting, then no member of the Church could be cast out. So why is this verse, referring specifically to members, part of the revelation?

Verse 5: Who is being talked about in this verse? Just as logic dictates that no *members* can be cast out if no one can, it also dictates that none who are “earnestly seeking the kingdom” can be cast out. So why include specific mention of this group?

Verse 6: What is a confirmation meeting? Is it a public meeting?

Verses 7–8: Verses 2–8 do not form a chiasm, but they do form a related rhetorical form, “inclusion,” in which there is a sandwich of material, beginning and ending with parallel themes or phrases and the filling of the sandwich between them:

- a Verse 2: Conduct meetings by the Spirit.
- b Verses 3–6: No one should be excluded from your public meetings.
- a' Verses 7–8: Ask God in all things.

What is the point of this inclusion? In other words, how are the first and last parts of the inclusion related to the middle part, verses 3–6?

Verse 7: What does “the end of your salvation” mean? How should we read this sentence, as saying “ask of God . . . that you may not be seduced by evil spirits,” or as saying “walking uprightly before me, considering the end of your salvation, [and] doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving, that ye may not be seduced”? What does your reading teach us about avoiding seduction by evil spirits and the teachings of men? Are “walking uprightly,” “considering the end of your salvation,” and “doing all things with prayer and thanksgiving” parallel in meaning here?

Verse 8: How does seeking the best gifts and remembering what they were given for keep us from being deceived?

Verse 9: Does this verse teach us anything about the scriptures in which we are commanded to ask and to seek, and promised that “it” will be given (e.g., D&C 4:7)?

How would one ask for a gift as a sign in order to consume that sign or gift on their lusts? Is this verse connected in any way (other than by using similar language) to James 4:3 and the verses surrounding it?

Verses 10–12: Why is it important to know that every person has been given a gift by the Spirit?

Why spread the gifts among many “that all may be profited thereby”? Why is that more likely to profit all than the alternative, giving many gifts to a few?

Verses 13–14: What do you make of the difference between verse 13 and verse 14? Are there particular individuals or groups to whom each of these might refer?

Verses 15–20: Compare these verses to 1 Corinthians 12:4–11. Here is another translation of the latter verses from 1 Corinthians that may help you make that comparison:

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another

prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes. (New American Bible)

Verse 15: What are “the differences of administration”? Administration of what?

What is the last part of the verse, referring to the “conditions of the children of men” about?

Verse 16: What is the “diversity of operations”? Is that different from the differences of administration?

Verse 17: What does “word of wisdom” mean here? What is its connection to D&C 50:1, 78:2, and 88:118? To D&C 89?

Verse 18: Is there a difference between wisdom and knowledge? Is it significant that wisdom comes before knowledge in this verse?

Verses 19–20: If the faith to be healed is a gift, does that mean that those who do not have that faith ought not to be expected to have that gift? How would we know whether someone has the faith to heal? We have been counseled not to seek out those with higher authority for our blessings, as if that higher authority had more power in a blessing, which it does not. But ought we to seek blessings from those who have the gift of healing? How would we know of such a person?

Verse 21: How is this gift different from the gift of healing?

Verse 22: Who has the gift of prophecy? If it is a gift, then how can it also be a priesthood right?

Verse 23: What is “the discerning of spirits”?

Verses 24–25: When this section was given, speaking in tongues did not refer primarily, if at all, to being able to teach the gospel in another language. Why do we now understand the verse differently?

Verse 26: One can read verses 9–26 as an inclusion (see my notes for verses 7–8 above), with verses 9–11 and 26 being the “bread” of the sandwich, and verses 12–25 being the “filling.” Does seeing that rhetorical form give you a different understanding of these verses? If so, what is that understanding?

Verse 27: What is the point of this verse? What danger is the bishop or other leader to be on guard against?

Verses 28–30: Here is another inclusion:

- a Verse 28: Those who ask by the Spirit will receive in the Spirit.
- b Verse 29: Someone has all of the gifts so that he can be the head.
- a' Verse 30: Those who ask in the Spirit in accordance with God’s will shall receive.

What is the point of that rhetorical structure?

What reason does verse 29 give for the head having all of the gifts? Why is that the case?

Verses 21–33: Why does the Lord repeat these admonitions: do everything by the Spirit in Christ’s name, be thankful for your blessings, and practice virtue and holiness? Didn’t verse 9 already make the same point, even if in different words?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 16

Doctrine and Covenants 59

Verses 1–4: This is a blessing for those who had moved into Jackson County, Missouri. How is it relevant to us in a time when we are commanded to remain in our stakes rather than to immigrate to Jackson?

Verse 1: Where is the land of Zion today? How do people come up to that land today? How would a person come to Zion with an eye single to the Lord's glory?

Verse 2: In this context, what does it mean to inherit the earth?

What does it mean to say that those who die will rest from their labors? Don't those in the spirit world and in the celestial kingdom have to work?

The verse says "they shall receive a crown." To whom does the word *they* refer in that phrase: to those who die, to those who live, or to both?

Verse 3: Notice that the parallel phrases at the beginning of this verse indicate that those who obey the gospel are those whose "feet stand upon the land of Zion." Why is standing on the land of Zion a good metaphor for obedience? And, how does one obey the gospel anyway? How can one obey good news?

Verse 4: Notice that this verse equates obedience with being faithful and diligent. What might that say to us about what it means to be obedient? On that understanding, were the Pharisees obedient? When are we like the Pharisees? How can we avoid being like them?

Notice too the three points of the crown that is given to the faithful and diligent: blessings, commandments, and revelations. Sometimes we think of commandments as constraints, but here they are portrayed as the reward of faithfulness. Why is it a reward to receive commandments?

Verse 5: Is the word *wherefore* just used to continue the flow of the verses, or does it mark a logical relation between the previous verses and this one? If the latter, how does the blessing of verses 1–4 lead to this commandment?

Compare this verse to Mark 12:30: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” (which is, itself, a repetition of Deuteronomy 10:12). What do you make of the fact that in this verse *soul* has been replaced by *mind*? Do you think that the grouping of these words is significant, with the word *heart* by itself and “might, mind and strength” together? If so, what does that grouping suggest?

The passage in Mark doesn’t refer to service. In Deuteronomy the words *love* and *serve* are parallel. In this verse, service to God gets its own clause. What do you make of those differences?

Why does latter-day revelation qualify our service to God by adding “in the name of Jesus Christ”?

In summary: How is love connected to service? What has that to do with obedience? What does it mean to love God with all our heart, might, and strength?

Verse 6: Why do you think the Lord chose these particular three sins—theft, adultery, murder—as illustrations of the commandment to love thy neighbor as oneself?

Does the phrase “nor do anything like unto it” modify only *kill* or does it modify each of the three sins mentioned?

Verse 7: This verse introduces the theme of most of the rest of this section, giving thanks to the Lord. What does it mean to thank God in *all* things? How do we do that?

Verse 8: Can you say specifically and concretely what a broken heart and a contrite spirit is? Have you experienced it? Why does the Lord speak of a broken heart and a contrite spirit as a sacrifice? What does it mean to offer that sacrifice up in righteousness? Could a broken heart and contrite spirit be offered any other way?

Verses 9–10: The Lord has listed the commandments that are important to those who are blessed to dwell in Zion. Why does he expand so much on this particular commandment? How is keeping the Sabbath related to dwelling in Zion?

Why does the Lord refer to our meeting house as a house of prayer? What does that description imply?

What does “offer up thy sacraments” mean? What does the word *sacrament* mean? Look in a dictionary, perhaps a historical dictionary like the *Oxford English Dictionary* to answer that question. Notice the plural of *sacraments*. Why is it plural?

How does going to the house of prayer and offering up our sacraments “more fully keep [us] unspotted from the world”? What does it mean to be “unspotted from the world”?

What are our devotions? Are they the same as our sacraments? What does the word *devotion* suggest? Think about what it means to be devoted to something.

Verses 11–12: Is *vows* used here to mean the same thing as *devotions* and *sacraments*? If our vows are to be offered up on all days, how is the Sabbath different?

What does it mean to confess our sins before our brethren as well as before the Father? How do we do that?

Verse 13: On the Sabbath, we should do no other thing. No other thing than what?

What does it mean to prepare something with singleness of heart?

The word *perfect* can sometimes mean *full* or *complete*, so that part of the last of this verse isn’t unusual. But how are fasting and joy the same?

Verse 14: Verse 13 identified fasting with the state of joy. This verse takes that comparison further, comparing it not only to the state of joy, but to the activity of rejoicing. Compare this verse to Isaiah 58:3–7. (The whole of that chapter of Isaiah is another beautiful piece on the Sabbath.) What should our fasting be like? What should it not be like?

Verses 15–19: If we do these things (what things?), the fulness of the earth is ours. What is the fulness of the earth?

These verses return to the statements in verses 2–3 that those who live will “inherit the earth” and “receive for their reward the good things of the earth, and it shall bring forth its strength.” Presumably the list that follows tells us more about that blessing. What does it mean for these things—beasts, fowls, herbs—to be ours? What does it mean that these things are to please the eye? That they are to gladden the heart? How might such things strengthen the body? How might they enliven the soul? What kind of relation to the natural world is indicated here, and why does it follow immediately on a revelation on the Sabbath in verses 9–14?

Verse 20: How do we use the things of the earth with judgment? When do we use to them excess? Is it extortion to use them wastefully or merely for our personal pleasure? When do we use them by extortion? What is our responsibility as to the things of the earth?

Verse 21: God is only angry with those who don’t confess his hand in all things and those who don’t obey. Is obedience the same as confessing his hand in all things? Does that mean that obeying is a means of thanking?

Verse 23: What peace is promised those who live righteously? Does this verse contradict D&C 58:4, where it says blessings come only after tribulation?

How could the Lord promise peace to those who were about to be chased from the state and murdered?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 17

Doctrine and Covenants 59:13–14, 21; 119; and 120

Thought questions for D&C 59 were included in lesson 16.

Doctrine and Covenants 119

Verses 1–3: What did the Lord mean when he said that the consecration of all surplus property would be the *beginning* of tithing? What is surplus?

How does verse 2 dictate the uses of tithing? Do we still use tithing only for those purposes?

Verse 4: What does this verse tell us will happen to tithing if we return to fully living the law of consecration?

Verse 5: To whom did this verse apply?

Is there a difference between putting all of your surplus into the bishop's hands (verse 1) and tithing your surplus (verse 5)?

Verse 6: How does the law of tithing sanctify the land of Zion to the Lord?

The end of the verse tells us that if we do not tithe, we will not have a land of Zion. Why not?

How does tithing make it possible for us to keep the Lord's statutes and commandments? Why is it necessary if the land of Zion is to be holy? Is that different than being sanctified to the Lord? If not, why is it mentioned?

Doctrine and Covenants 120

We know who the First Presidency is, but in the terms we use today, who is the bishop and his council that are referred to here? In our terms to whom does “my high council” refer?

Why was it important that we have a revelation telling the Church who is to decide how the tithing funds are to be spent? In other words, why not simply allow the Church to have figured that out over time, as we have figured out so many other things?

Lesson 18

Doctrine and Covenants 95; 109; 110

Doctrine and Covenants 95

Verses 1–2: Paraphrased, these verses seem to say: I love you, and I chasten those whom I love so that their sins can be forgiven. Chastisement is necessary for forgiveness of sins because it prepares a way for people to be delivered from temptation. How does chastisement help prepare us to be delivered from temptation? Is it important that people are delivered *from* temptation (passive voice)? Why must we be delivered from temptation for our sins to be forgiven? How does the Lord chastise us?

Verse 3: How had the Saints “not considered the *great* commandment” (emphasis added) with regard to the Lord’s command to build a temple? (See D&C 88:119–20 for the command to build the Kirtland Temple.)

Verse 4: Verses 1–5 are one long sentence. It is relatively easy to understand how the first three verses fit into the sentence grammatically, but it is not obvious how verse 4 is related to the rest of the sentence. Does it describe one of the purposes of the Kirtland Temple?

How is the missionary work initiated by the early apostles a way that the Lord pruned his vineyard? In other words, how are we to understand a gathering as a pruning?

What is the Lord talking about when he refers to “my strange act”? What meaning might “strange” have here? (Compare Isaiah 28:21.)

Verse 5: Verse 1 ends with a dash, as does verse 4. Does that suggest that verses 2–4 are a parenthetical remark and that the sentence proper consists of verses 1 and 5? Or, are the dashes unrelated to each other, with the first one marking off verse 1 from verses 2–4, and the second one marking off verse 5 from verse 4?

Would those who received this revelation have understood it to refer to specific people rather than to be a general claim? If you heard this as referring to specific people, what might you have thought?

Verse 6: This verse names the sin that those ordained but not chosen have committed, “walking in darkness at noon-day.” Considering the context in which this was given, can you say specifically what they had done that meant they were ignoring the light? Do we find ourselves ignoring the light? When?

Verse 7: What is “this cause,” the cause for which the Lord has commanded them to call a solemn assembly?

Why does the Lord speak here of fasting and mourning? Why are they fasting? For what are they mourning?

In the Old and New Testaments, fasting seems to have three purposes: as an act of penance (a sign of repentance), as an act of mourning (which is probably why it could also be an act of penance, mourning that one has sinned), and as a way of reinforcing prayer. I believe that we almost always

think of it as a way of reinforcing our supplications to God. This verse suggests that perhaps it ought also to still be a sign of mourning and penance for us. How would we make it that?

Verse 8: This is an early reference to the endowment. (See also D&C 38:32, 38; 43:16; 105:11; and 110:9.) In each case where the Lord promises the endowment, he speaks of being “endowed with power from on high.” Does that phrase refer only to a specific endowment that was given in Kirtland, or does it also apply to the endowment as we know it? What “power from on high” was given in Kirtland? What power from on high is given us in our endowment?

Verse 9: What does it mean that the Saints were commanded to “tarry, even as mine apostles at Jerusalem” (compare Luke 24:49)?

Verse 10: Is the Lord naming two separate sins here, the failure to build the temple when commanded and the contentions that arose in the School of the Prophets, or is he naming two related sins? Or is he naming the same sin in two different ways?

Verse 11: The Lord promises that if they are obedient they will have the power to build the temple. Does this suggest anything about why they had not built the temple earlier? What reasons might they have given for not building it?

Verse 12: How is the absence of the Father’s love connected to walking in darkness? Is his love the same as the Holy Ghost?

Verses 13–14: The Lord says: Do not build the house after the manner of the world because I do not ask you to live after the manner of the world. How is not living like the world related to not building like the world? Can you explain what the Lord is saying here?

Verse 17: Orson Pratt said that *Ahman* meant “God” in Adamic. Perhaps *Ahman* is a transliteration of the Hebrew that we pronounce “amen.” Isaiah 65:16 describes God as “God Amen,” though most translators translate *amen* as “truth” in that verse. Revelation 3:14 refers to Christ as “the Amen.” Why might the Lord identify himself in this particular revelation by the name “Son Ahman”?

Alphus is the first letter of the Greek alphabet (though, oddly, *alphus* is the Latin pronunciation of the name of that letter), and *omegus* is the last letter of the Greek alphabet (with the same oddity of using the Latin name rather than the Greek). In Revelation 1:11, Jesus identifies himself as “Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” What does it mean to say that he is first and last? Why does he identify himself (paraphrasing) in this verse as “the first, in other words, the last”? That does not mean the same as “the first and the last.” What do we make of that difference?

Doctrine and Covenants 109

This section is the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, received by revelation. Oliver Cowdery’s journal tells us that he, Sidney Rigdon, Warren Cowdery, and William Parrish assisted Joseph Smith in writing the prayer. What might that teach us about how revelation can come?

How can a prayer be received by revelation? By committee? If prayer is communication with the Lord, how can he tell us what to say to him (see Romans 8:26)?

In 1831 the Lord told the Saints he would retain an interest in Kirtland for five years (D&C 64:21). Thus, anyone who remembered that earlier revelation and believed it also had to believe that the dedication was the beginning of the end for Kirtland. What would you think of building a temple only to abandon it?

Verses 1–3: What do these verses tell about why the Saints built the temple?

Verse 4: We usually talk about receiving salvation, but this verse talks of salvation being administered. What is the difference? What does it mean to administer salvation?

What does it mean for the Lord to accept a temple?

Verse 5: What purpose was the Kirtland Temple to serve? How is that different from temples today? How is that the same?

Verses 7–9: How do these verses describe the Kirtland Temple? For example, how was it a house of learning and study? Is there any similarity between these particular purposes of the Kirtland Temple and the purposes of temples today?

How would a temple make our incomings, outgoings, and salutations be in the Lord's name? What does it mean to say they are in his name?

Verses 10–13: Were you to sum up what the Saints are asking for here, what would you say?

When we ask the Lord for his grace, what are we asking for?

What does it mean for something to be done to the Lord's honor?

What promises might they expect to be fulfilled? (Footnote 11a is helpful.)

What does it mean for the Lord's glory to rest on something?

What does it mean for something to be dedicated to the Lord? What does *dedicated* mean? *Sanctified*? *Consecrated*?

What does it mean for the Lord's presence to be in a place? Can that presence be in more than one place at a time? How might those entering the Kirtland Temple feel the Lord's power?

Verses 14–19: Once again there is the mention of study in the temple. The School of the Prophets was in the upper rooms of the Kirtland Temple. Is that what this verse is referring to? If so, why was that school so important to the Church?

Look in a history book to see if you discover what kinds of things were taught in the School of the Prophets. How were those things important to the Church? Today is there anything similar to the School of the Prophets? Is the temple still a house of study? How so?

What does it mean to be prepared to obtain every needful thing?

How is the temple a house of prayer? A house of fasting? A house of faith? How is it a house of glory?

Compare verses 7–9 to verses 14–19. Why this repetition? Sometimes scripture repeats things to “frame” what occurs between the repetitions. Is that happening here? If so, what gets “framed” and what does that framing do?

Verses 20–21: How are these verses related to each other?

Verses 22–23: What does it mean to be armed with the Lord’s power?

What does it mean for the Lord’s name to be upon his servants?

What does it mean for his glory to be round about them? For his angels to have charge over them?

To whom does *they* in the phrase “that they may know that this is thy work” refer? To the Saints or to the people in the world?

Verses 24–33: What is the theme of these verses?

To whom does “the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house” refer? Is it the Church as a whole or some group within the Church?

What does it mean to “hold a name and standing” in the temple?

The Lord has said that Kirtland will be held for five more years. This prayer comes in that fifth year. How, then, can we make sense of what is being prayed for? What does it mean for this people (the people referred to in verse 24) to be established for eternity? Does it help to think about the more general question of what it means to establish a thing?

Of what might the writers have been thinking when writing verses 25–33? This prayer comes almost exactly two years after Zion’s Camp. How might that experience have changed the Saints’ understanding of what these verses mean?

Verse 34: How is it relevant that all people sin?

Verse 35: What does it mean to seal the anointing of the Lord’s ministers? What are they asking for?

Verses 36–37: In the evening, after the two dedicatory sessions, Joseph Smith gathered some brethren to teach them about the washings and anointings. Here is what Joseph recorded in his journal:

Brother George A. Smith arose and began to prophesy, when a noise was heard like the sound of a rushing mighty wind, which filled the Temple, and all the congregation simultaneously arose, being moved upon by an invisible power; many began to speak in tongues and prophesy; others saw glorious visions; and I beheld the Temple was filled with angels, which fact I declared to the congregation. The people of the neighborhood came running together (hearing an unusual sound within and seeing a bright pillar of light like a pillar of fire resting upon the Temple), and were astonished at what was taking place. This continued until the meeting closed at eleven p.m.
(*History of the Church*, 2:428)

Why would these particular ordinances be greeted with such spectacular heavenly signs?

Verse 38: What is “the testimony of the covenant”? What does it mean to put a testimony on someone?

What does it mean to seal up the law (compare Isaiah 8:16 in context and 2 Nephi 18:16)? How does preaching the gospel do that?

Verses 39–46, 54–58: What is the point of these verses? How would you sum them up in your own words?

Verses 47–53: What is the Saints’ attitude toward their persecutors? Do you think it has changed from what it was before Zion’s Camp?

Verse 59: For what are they asking here?

Verses 60–67: About whom are they praying in these verses? Who, for example, are the children of Jacob? How do you know the answer to that question?

Verses 68–73: The prayer is for the President of the Church, and the presidents of the Church, and for the whole Church. Who are Joseph’s “immediate connections” (verse 70)? What is being asked for them?

Who are “the presidents” (verse 71)?

Why are “all the poor and meek of the earth” included in the prayer for the whole Church (verse 72)?

What does the image at the end of verse 73 convey? (We’ve seen it before in D&C 5:14.) What does it mean to shine forth fair as the moon? As clear as the sun? What do you make of the fact that the last half of this verse is a quotation from the Song of Solomon (Song of Solomon 6:10)?

What does it mean to describe one's beloved as "terrible as an army with banners," in other words, "awe-inspiring as bannered hosts"? How does that description apply in this context?

Verse 72: If the Lord knows everything, why would we ask him to remember us and his church? The Prophet Joseph Smith prays that the Lord will remember various people so that the kingdom will fill the whole earth. How will the Lord's remembrance of these particular groups of people help bring about the filling of the earth with his kingdom?

Each of the next verses (73–76) begins with *that*, indicating that the content of those verses will come if the Lord remembers the people mentioned here. Can you explain how the content of each of those verses is related to the Lord's remembrance?

Here the Prophet prays that the Lord will remember his church, the families and relatives of the members of the church, the sick and afflicted in those families, and all the poor and meek of the earth. And his prayer suggests that the Lord's remembrance is connected to our salvation. In the sacrament prayer, we pray that we will remember the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and it is obvious that doing so has to do with our salvation. How are these two kinds of remembrance related?

Verse 74: Why is the Church said to be adorned as a bride? (Compare passages such as Isaiah 49:18, 61:10, 62:5; and Revelation 21:2.) To what does this allude? What will it mean for the heavens to be unveiled?

What does it mean for the mountains to flow down, the valleys to be exalted, and the rough places to be made smooth? How will that fill the earth with the Lord's glory?

This is a paraphrase of Isaiah 40:4–5. How does this verse connect this part of the temple dedicatory prayer to the prayer in section 65?

Verse 75: What is the Prophet describing in this verse? What is he praying for? If it is something that has been promised already, why pray for it?

Verse 76: What does it mean to have pure garments? Why do you think sin is so often portrayed as blood stains on our clothing? What particular sin might this image allude to, and why is that particular sin a type for all other sins? Why are garments used as a symbol of purity? Is there a difference between having pure garments and robes of righteousness? If so, what is that difference?

What does it mean for us to have palms in our hands? To what event in the Savior's life does that phrase refer?

What does it mean to reap eternal joy for all our sufferings?

Doctrine and Covenants 110

Some background for the revelation that follows: The Kirtland Temple was dedicated on 27 March 1836. This revelation was received on 3 April, the same year, during a sacrament meeting in the temple. At that meeting, the Twelve administered the sacrament, and the First Presidency and perhaps also other presidents distributed it to the congregation. After the sacrament had been blessed

and passed, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery went to the pulpit at the west end of the temple (there were pulpits at each end, the one at the east for the Aaronic Priesthood officers and that at the west for the Melchizedek Priesthood), and they had the curtains (called “veils”) that partitioned it off from the rest of the temple dropped. Then they bowed in silent prayer. This vision came to them after their prayers.

Verses 1–3: What does this description suggest to us about appearances of the Lord?

Verse 4: Why does the Lord choose these descriptions of himself on this occasion?

Are the four clauses of this verse parallel: “I am the first and the last”; “I am he who liveth”; “I am he who was slain”; and “I am your advocate with the Father”? Does the order in which they occur teach us anything?

Verse 5: What sins might Joseph and Oliver have needed forgiveness for? Compare this to D&C 29:3, also given to Joseph and Oliver. Does the repetition of this forgiveness teach us anything about the Savior? About ourselves? About our leaders?

Verses 6–7: What does it mean to say that the Lord has accepted the temple? What does it mean to say that his name will be there? How did he manifest himself in mercy to the members there?

Verse 8: Does this answer the question of how the Lord was to manifest himself in mercy?

Verses 9–10: Notice that verse 9 says that the endowment has already been given in this house. To what might the Lord have been referring? (Since the endowment as we know it was not given until the Church was in Nauvoo, it does not refer to that.)

Compare verses 7–10 to the dedicatory prayer (section 109). How do these verses answer that prayer?

Verses 11–16: In their *Doctrine and Covenants Commentary*, Hyrum Smith (a later Hyrum Smith, not Joseph Smith’s brother) and Janne M. Sjodahl say: “Elias was the representative of the Patriarchal dispensation; Moses, of the Mosaic, and Elijah of the dispensation preparatory to the coming of the Lord. Each delegated part of his authority to the Prophet Joseph” (p. 727). Do you think this comment is helpful? Can you think of a scriptural or prophetic basis for their comment? (See the notes for D&C 27:6 in the lesson 9 materials for more on Elias and Elijah.)

Verse 11: Who is Israel in this case? (Compare D&C 133:13 and 26.) Why would Moses rather than another prophet have had the keys of the gathering of Israel?

Verse 12: What does “the dispensation of the gospel of Abraham” mean? This seems to be the only place in scripture where the phrase appears.

Verses 13–16: Is Elijah’s appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:3) related to this appearance? What curse would have come if Elijah had not come to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers?

Verse 16 begins with *therefore*: the keys of the kingdom are committed into the hands of Joseph Smith *because* Elijah came to turn hearts. Can you explain this?

Lesson 19

Doctrine and Covenants 19:16–19; 76:40–42,
96–112; 88:14–16; and 138:55–56

I have added some verses from section 76 to the materials.

Doctrine and Covenants 19

Verses 16–19: This is one long sentence. The first part of this sentence, verse 16, holds out a promise. The next part, verse 17, contains a warning of what will happen if the promise isn't accepted: those who don't repent must suffer as the Savior suffered. Verses 18 and 19 expand on verse 17 by telling us about his suffering. Through verse 18, the message is relatively straightforward. But verse 19, introduced with *nevertheless*, causes difficulty. How does the phrase "glory be to the Father" work? What does it tell us in this verse, and how is what it tells us related to what comes before? What does "preparations unto the children of men" mean?

Doctrine and Covenants 76

Verses 40–42: When we speak or testify of the gospel, is this what we mean? If so, what does this verse teach us, and why is that important to these three verses? If not, what is the alternative?

What does "whom the Father had put into his power" mean? How does "made by him" fit with the rest of the sentence grammatically: "whom the Father had . . . made by him"?

Doctrine and Covenants 76

Verses 96–98: What does it mean to say that each of the kingdoms “is one”?

Verse 98: What does it mean to say that the glories in the telestial world differ from one another like the glory of the stars differ from one another? Is the same thing true of the other kingdoms?

Verses 99–101: What does it mean to say that the inhabitants of the telestial world “are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas . . . some of one and some of another”? (See 1 Corinthians 1–3.)

Why is Christ included in the list at the end of verse 100? How could someone claim to be “of Christ” but not have received the gospel? Does the definition of *gospel* that we see in verses 40–42 answer the last question?

Verse 102: Does this verse begin a new category, or is it continuing to discuss the inhabitants of the telestial kingdom?

What is the verse referring to when it speaks of the Saints being gathered up into a cloud? (See 1 Thessalonians 4:17.) When will that occur?

Verses 103–6: Is the list in verse 103 an inclusive list or an example? Who are the sorcerers? Compare Malachi 3:5. Is this list an echo of that one? It may also be an echo of Revelation 21:8. The sorcerers of the Old and New Testaments seem to have been people who not only performed magical acts but also claimed to be incarnations of divine power and, so, competitors to Jesus’s claim to be the *only* Son of the Father. Given that context, in our day, to whom might “sorcerers” refer?

Verse 103: What does it mean to say that someone “loves and makes a lie”? Do adultery and fornication do that? If so, how? Are there ways in which we might love our children and make a lie? How about the Lord? Can we love him and make a lie?

Verse 104: How is it that those who will go to the terrestrial kingdom “suffer the wrath of God on earth”?

Verses 105–6: How long will those who inherit the telestial kingdom suffer the wrath of God, “the vengeance of eternal fire”? What does this suggest about those who inherit the other two kingdoms?

Verses 107–8: To what kingdom does the first clause of the verse refer?

How is the winepress an apt image for Christ’s suffering? Why does he focus here on his suffering rather than on his resurrection?

Verse 109: What does this verse suggest about how many people will go to the telestial kingdom?

Verse 110: Why is it important for us to know that every person in the telestial kingdom will bow to and confess to Christ? Why is it important that they make confession to him?

Verse 111: Why does this verse begin with “for”? How does that word connect the ideas of this verse to those that preceded it?

To whom does the “they” at the beginning of the verse refer? To the inhabitants of the terrestrial world? If not, to whom?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 14: What does it mean to say that the resurrection occurs through the redemption?

Verse 15: This is an important doctrine, for traditional Christianity has often denigrated the body: our culture often looks on the body as a hindrance (or, in backlash, it thinks of the body as the only thing). I suspect that the privilege and acclaim we sometimes give supposedly intellectual professions over more physical professions is a remnant of this misunderstanding of the body and the spirit. In what other ways do we sometimes forget this necessary unity of spirit and body?

Note: though *soul* is defined here as the unity of the spirit and body, it isn't always or even often used that way in other scriptures. This definition is one that seems to have been saved for the latter days. Therefore, when you read the word *soul* in scripture, you must ask yourself whether the writer meant *spirit*, or *soul* as it is used here.

Verse 16: What is the significance of this teaching for our understanding of the plan of salvation?

Doctrine and Covenants 138

Verses 55–56: To whom does *they* refer in verse 55?

Does verse 56 tell us that all the great souls were saved for the last days? Are there other ways to understand what it says?

What “first lessons” do you think the great ones might have received in the spirit world?

Lesson 20

Doctrine and Covenants 76; 131:1–4;
132:19–24; and 137

Doctrine and Covenants 76

The vision that resulted in this section lasted about one and one-half hours. According to one of the twelve people who witnessed Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon receiving the vision, one would ask, “What do I see?” and then describe a scene. The other would then say, “I see the same.” They alternated in this method for the time and wrote the account given in section 76 afterward. How is section 76 an explanation of John 5:29 (see verse 15 of the section)?

Verse 5: What does it mean to fear the Lord? To help you think about that, find out the meaning of the Hebrew word translated *fear*.

What does it mean to serve the Lord?

Verses 6–10: What is promised those who fear the Lord and serve him? Why do you think that is so?

Verse 12: What does it mean to say that Joseph’s and Oliver’s eyes were opened “by the power of the Spirit”?

Verse 13: What does it mean to say that the Son was “in the bosom of the Father, even from the beginning”?

Verse 14: The wording here is slightly unusual: “Of whom we bear record; and the record we bear is the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” The first clause is no surprise. Joseph and Oliver bear record of the Son; they testify of him. But why does the verse say that their testimony is the fulness of the gospel?

Verse 18: About what do you think Joseph and Sidney marveled? What does it mean to say they marveled because it was given to them of the Spirit? What was given to them of the Spirit?

Verse 19: President McKay said, “Meditation is one of the most secret, sacred doors through which we pass into the presence of the Lord.” All of us have stopped to think about something sometimes, but that probably isn’t what President McKay meant. What is meditation? When do we do it? How do we do it?

Verse 12 says that their eyes were opened by the power of the Spirit. This verse says that their eyes were opened when the Lord touched them. What do those two claims suggest? Is there a connection between the Lord touching their eyes to give them this vision and the story of the man born blind from birth (John 9:1–7)?

Verses 20–21: What is the significance of what they see here? Why is even this small part of the whole revelation an important vision in itself?

Verses 22–24: What does it mean to say that this testimony is “last of all?” What is the import of the testimony that Christ lives? Why is that particular part of the message so important? What does it mean to say, at one and the same

time, that Christ is the Only Begotten of the Father and that the inhabitants of the worlds are begotten sons and daughters of God?

The grammar of verse 24 is ambiguous. It can say that (1) the worlds are created by the Savior and that (2) all of us are begotten sons and daughters of God. Or it can say that (1) the worlds are created by the Savior and that (2) the inhabitants of the worlds are begotten sons and daughters through the Savior. What is the difference? How do you think we should understand the verse? Why?

Verses 25–29: Why does this section testify not only of Jesus, but also of Satan? Why do you think Satan is called *Lucifer*, meaning “the morning star”? This name is mentioned in only two other places in scripture, Isaiah 14:12 and 2 Nephi 24:12. The Hebrew word in Isaiah (and presumably in 2 Nephi) has a root meaning of “to be clear” or “to be shining,” but it can also be used to mean “to make a show,” “to boast,” “to make a fool of oneself,” “to rave,” and even “to stultify.” How might these different meanings of his name help us understand who Satan is? Might that name tell us something about why the scriptures so consistently warn us against all pride?

Verse 29: What does it mean to say that Satan makes war on the Saints? That he encompasses them?

Verses 30–38, 44–48: Why do you suppose the Lord gives us so much information about the sons of perdition?

Verse 31: What does this verse tell us about those who fought alongside Satan? Why is that important for us to know?

Verse 32: Why are these people called “sons of *perdition*”? What does *perdition* mean? Why would it be better for them never to have been born? What would their state have been like had they not been born?

Verse 33: What does it mean to say that the sons of perdition are vessels of wrath? (Compare Romans 9:22.) What is “the wrath of God”? What does it mean to suffer that wrath?

What is the punishment of “the devil and his angels”?

What does the phrase “in eternity” mean here? Does it modify “the devil and his angels” or does it tell us when the sons of perdition will suffer the wrath of God?

Verse 35: What does it mean to deny the Holy Ghost after having received it? (See also *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 138.) When does a person receive the Holy Ghost? Is receiving the Holy Ghost the same as receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost?

How does a person crucify the Son of God unto himself? How does a person “put him to open shame”? (Compare Hebrews 6:6.)

Verse 37: What does it mean that the sons of perdition are the only ones on whom the second death shall have any power? Don’t all except those in the celestial kingdom suffer the second death, the second separation from God?

Verse 38: What does it mean that the sons of perdition “shall not be redeemed in the due time of the Lord”?

Verse 39: If “all the rest shall be brought forth by the resurrection of the dead,” does this mean that the sons of perdition will not be resurrected? Does this verse, with verse 32

and Jacob's teaching in 2 Nephi 9:8–9, help us understand the fate of those people?

Verses 41–42: When we speak or testify of the gospel, is this what we mean?

Verse 50: Who are the just? Why are they described as *just* rather than something else?

Verses 51–70, 92–95: Those going to the celestial kingdom.

Doctrine and Covenants 137 adds to this description:

Verses 2–4: What are we to make of this description? What is its point?

Verses 5–10: What does the Prophet learn here about the celestial kingdom? When was baptism for the dead revealed?

How might we read these verses independent of section 137? In other words, how would this have been understood when section 76 was received?

Verses 51–53: What have those resurrected to celestial glory done?

If baptism is to wash us clean, what does it mean to say that keeping the commandments washes us (verse 42)?

What does “to overcome by faith” mean? What is it that he is speaking of us overcoming? How do we do that by faith?

Verse 54: Why are these people said to be “the church of the Firstborn”? Does that name have any particular significance in this section, given other beings who have been spoken of?

Verses 55, 59: The law of consecration requires the Saints to give all things. Here they are given all things. The exchange is all for all, but our all and his all are incomparable. We do well in the exchange, but he does not. Why would he make such an exchange?

Verse 56: What is the import of the prophecy that the just will be kings and queens, priests and priestesses?

Verse 57: What is the significance of the just holding the Melchizedek Priesthood?

Doctrine and Covenants 132:19–24 is relevant:

Verses 19–20: Here is my précis of these verses:

If a man and woman marry in the covenant *and* their marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise through someone holding appropriate priesthood authority, *and* if they abide in the covenant and do not commit murder, then:

They will come forth in the first or second resurrection.

They will inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths.

Their marriage will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

They will receive everything that the officiator has promised them.

They will receive exaltation and eternal increase.

They will be gods.

What does it mean to inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths?

What does it mean for one's marriage to be written in the Lamb's Book of Life?

What is exaltation? What does it mean to say that they will be gods? Verse 20 says, "They shall be gods, because they have no end," and it uses "they continue" as a parallel to "they have no end." What does it mean to say that they will be gods *because* they continue? Continue in what way?

Verse 24 (still in reference to section 132): Why does the Lord use the plural here, *lives* instead of *life*?

See also Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4.

What does it mean to say that marriage is an order of the priesthood (verse 2)? Why is the highest degree of the celestial kingdom reserved for the married? The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 300–301)

How is eternal increase a blessing?

What about the faithful saints who for some reason are unable to be sealed to a husband or wife in this life?

Does D&C 124:49 give an answer to this question?

Verse 58 (returning to section 76): In context, this verse says that because the Saints have received all things and become priests and priestesses and kings and queens, they are gods and the sons and daughters of God. Doesn't that mean those who haven't done these things are not his children? How can that be, given the doctrine that we are all his spirit children?

Verse 60: What is the significance of the future tense in this verse: "They shall overcome all things" rather than "They have overcome all"?

Verse 61: How does this verse follow from verse 60 (and perhaps also the verses before it), as the word *wherefore* suggests?

Verse 62: Why would we want to dwell in the presence of God forever? Why does this verse speak of "his Christ"? Is there another?

Verses 63–65: Explain what the Lord is prophesying here.

Verse 66: Why does this verse say that they *are* come to Mount Zion rather than they *will* come to it? Is this an implicit reference to Hebrews 12:22?

Where do Latter-day Saints believe Mount Zion will be?

Verse 67 (*and* 54): Why is the church of the Firstborn also called the church of Enoch? Aren't we commanded not to

call the church after the name of someone other than the Savior?

Verse 69: In context, what does it mean to be a just person? What does it mean to be “made perfect”? Who makes us perfect? How?

Jesus was killed by Roman soldiers on the orders of a Roman commander hoping to appease the corrupt Jewish leadership (primarily the temple leadership) in Jesus’s day. So why does this say that he shed his own blood?

Verse 70: What does it mean to have a celestial body?

What does *glory* mean in this verse?

Verses 71–80: The terrestrial kingdom. Perhaps we should know about the celestial kingdom and who will go there because it is our goal. However, why should we know about the terrestrial and telestial kingdoms, much less the fate of the sons of perdition?

Verse 72: To whom does “they are they who died without law” refer? Does this verse teach that all those who do not hear about the law before they die will inherit the terrestrial kingdom? (See D&C 137 and 138.)

Verse 73: Since no one was resurrected prior to Christ, everyone who died before his visit to spirit prison was in that prison. Does this mean that everyone who died before him will go to the terrestrial kingdom? If not, why not?

Verses 74–77: Grammatically these verses continue to describe those whom Christ visited in spirit prison. However, we take them more broadly. What justifies our doing so?

Verse 74: Does “received not” mean the same as “rejected”?

Verse 75: If these people were blinded by others, how are they responsible for their failure to accept the gospel?

Verse 76: What does it mean to receive of Jesus’s glory but not of his fulness?

Verse 79: To what people does this refer? What does it mean not to be valiant in the testimony of Jesus? How can these people not have been valiant in the testimony of Jesus if they didn’t receive it (see verses 74 and 76)?

Or do these verses perhaps describe various groups of people in the terrestrial kingdom rather than all the attributes the people in that kingdom share?

Verses 81–89, 98–106, 109–12: The telestial kingdom. What does it mean to say that someone receives *neither* the gospel *nor* the testimony of Jesus? How could a person receive one without receiving the other? Why does it describe those in the telestial kingdom as having been “thrust down to hell” (verse 84) when verse 81 describes the kingdom as a kingdom of glory? If the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are all members of the Godhead, what does it mean to say that those who receive “of the Holy Spirit” in the telestial kingdom (verse 86) do not receive of “his fulness”? What does it mean to say that they receive “through the ministration of the terrestrial”?

Does verse 98 tell us that there are many different glories in the telestial kingdom? If so, why would that be? Does verse 111 answer that question?

What do verses 99–101 tell us about those in the telestial kingdom? Are these the members of other churches? If so, how did they differ from those in the terrestrial world?

What does it mean to “love and make a lie” (verse 103)?

What might it mean to be a servant of the Father and the Son who cannot enter into their presence (verse 112)?

Verse 82: Is not receiving the gospel of Christ the same as not receiving the testimony of Jesus? If they are different, how so?

Verse 84: What is this verse saying?

Verse 85: What does it mean to be redeemed from the devil?

Verse 86: How do the inhabitants of the telestial kingdom receive the Holy Spirit? What does that mean?

Verse 87: What does it mean to say that the terrestrial kingdom receives something (the Holy Spirit?) “through the ministration of the celestial”? Explain verses 86–87.

Verse 88: What does it mean that the inhabitants of the telestial world will be “heirs of salvation”? Salvation from what? What do the ministering angels have to do with being heirs?

Verses 89–90: What understanding does this give us that isn’t had by those outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

Verse 94: What does it mean to see as we are seen and to know as we are known? (Compare 1 Corinthians 13.)

Verses 92–95: Why does the Lord return to a description of the celestial kingdom?

Verse 95: How can we be equal in power, might, and dominion with the Father?

Verses 96–98: What does it mean to say that each of the kingdoms “is one”?

Verse 98: What does it mean to say that the glories in the telestial world differ from one another like the glory of the stars differ from one another? Is the same thing true of the other kingdoms?

Verses 99–101: What does it mean to say that the inhabitants of the telestial world “are they who are of Paul, and of Apollos, and of Cephas . . . some of one and some of another”? Why is Christ included in the list at the end of verse 100? How could someone claim to be “of Christ” but not have received the gospel? Does the definition of *gospel* that we see in verses 40–42 answer the last question?

Verse 102: Does this verse begin a new category or does it continue to discuss the inhabitants of the telestial kingdom?

What is the verse referring to when it speaks of the Saints being gathered up into a cloud? When will that occur?

Verses 103–6: Is the list in verse 103 an inclusive list or an example? Who are the *sorcerers*? Compare Malachi 3:5. Is this list an echo of that one? It may also be an echo of Revelation 21:8. The sorcerers of the Old and New Testaments seem to have been people who not only performed magical acts but also claimed to be incarnations of divine power and, so, competitors to Jesus’s claim to be the *only* Son of the Father. In our day, to whom might *sorcerers* refer?

Verse 103: If the telestial kingdom is going to be filled with liars, adulterers, and whoremongers, how can it have a glory that surpasses understanding (verse 89)?

Why will their habitation be a mansion (verse 111), and how can they serve the Most High (verse 112)?

What does it mean to say that someone “loves and makes a lie”?

Verses 107–8: To what kingdom does the first clause of the verse refer?

How is the winepress an apt image for Christ’s suffering? Why does he focus here on his suffering rather than on his resurrection?

Verse 109: What does this verse suggest about how many people will go to the telestial kingdom?

Verse 110: Why is it important for us to know that every person in the telestial kingdom will bow to and confess to Christ? Why is it important that they make confession to him?

Verse 111: Why does this verse begin with *for*? How does that word connect the ideas of this verse to those that preceded it? To whom does the word *they* at the beginning of the verse refer? To the inhabitants of the terrestrial world? If not, to whom does it refer?

Verse 112: What might we gather from the teaching that those in the telestial kingdom will be “servants of the Most High”?

Verses 116–18: Who can have the privilege of seeing and understanding the things revealed here? What does it mean to see and know for oneself? How does a person come to that state?

According to these verses, how does the Holy Ghost prepare us for life after the resurrection?

Lesson 21

Doctrine and Covenants 29:9–29; 34:5–12;
45:16–75; 88:86–89; 101:22–34; and 133

This lesson focuses on the second coming. Why is it important for us to know about that event? If we come to Christ now, making and keeping our covenants, living as he would have us live, then we will be accepted. If we are who we ought to be, then the result will be the same for us, no matter when the second coming happens, so at first it *seems* that the second coming is not very relevant to our lives. However, the Lord has seen fit to reveal a great deal about it, so it must be important. How?

Doctrine and Covenants 29

Verses 9–11: John the Baptist also preached that the kingdom was coming soon (Matthew 3:2). Jesus preached the same message (Matthew 4:17 and parallels), and he told the apostles to preach the same message (Matthew 10:17). After Christ's mission, Paul preached the same thing to the early Christians (2 Thessalonians 2:2), as did Peter (1 Peter 4:7). And Revelation tells us that the end is near (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). How are we to understand the message “the end is near,” when that message has been the same for 2,000 years? Or has the message changed in some way?

Verse 12: What is the import of the fact that the Twelve who were with Jesus will judge the house of Israel?

Verses 13–20: What is the point of these verses?

Verse 21: Is this the culmination of verses 13–20, or does it name an additional thing that will happen?

Verses 22–25: What does it mean to refer to men, beasts, fowls, and fishes as the fulness of the earth, as does verse 24? What does it mean that all these things shall become new?

Over the course of my life, I have lost and grown a lot of hairs. Were all of them to be restored to me, I could probably not hold my head up because of the weight, so we cannot take “not one hair . . . shall be lost” literally. What is it meant to tell us?

What is a mote? Except in this verse, every other use of the word in scripture has the same theme as Matthew 7:4–5, where it seems to be a metaphor for some small moral defect. Is that relevant to understanding this verse?

Verses 26–27: What are these verses about?

What does it mean to say that Christ is “ashamed to own [someone] before the Father”? What meaning does the word *own* have here?

Verses 28–29: Speaking of those whom he is ashamed to own, the Lord says, “never at any time have I declared from mine own mouth that they should return.” To where has he not said they can return? Does he mean “I have decreed that they cannot return”? If he does, why does he use this unusual way of saying that?

Doctrine and Covenants 34

Verses 5–12: What do these verses add to what we learned from section 29?

Doctrine and Covenants 45

Verse 16: To whom were these verses addressed? What does that tell us about how we should understand them?

Verse 17: Historically many religions have taught that being in a body is bondage, that we are freer when we do not have one. Why might they believe that? How would you explain to someone with that belief why it is bondage to be without a body?

Verses 18–24: Compare verses 18–21 and verses 22–23. What things will pass away in the first set of verses? When? What things won't pass away "until all shall be fulfilled"? When is the time that all will be fulfilled? To what does "that day" refer in verse 24?

Verses 25–27: What time period does this describe?

Verses 28–29: Does verse 28 tell us that people don't perceive the light *because* they turn their hearts from the Lord, or does it make two points, that people don't perceive the light *and* that they turn their hearts?

Verses 34–35: The disciples are troubled to hear about the diseases, earthquakes, and wars that will precede the Lord's return, and he tells them those are signs that will assure his disciples that the promises made to them will be fulfilled

(verse 35). To what promises is he referring here? How do we know what to make of the signs mentioned? In other words, how are they a comfort to us?

“Desolating sickness” (verse 31) is probably less common now than it used to be. It certainly isn’t more common; we have nothing today like the Black Plague of the Middle Ages. Geologists tell us that there hasn’t been any increase in the number of earthquakes (verse 33). And, like epidemic disease, war (verse 33) probably occurs less often today than it used to, but it almost certainly doesn’t occur any more often. That means that the frequency of these things isn’t what will reassure us, but if not that, then how are we to be reassured by such events? (Compare D&C 88:88–89.) Though the frequency of war has decreased, has perhaps its intensity increased? The two world wars of the twentieth century are something new in world history.

Verses 36–39: Does this parable answer the question about the previous two verses? How?

Verses 43–44: Where is “this place”? What is the Lord telling us when he says “they shall look for me”?

Why would it be that “he who watches not for me shall be cut off”? Why are we required not only to live up to the covenants we make, but also to look for the coming of the Lord?

Verse 46: Who are those who have “slept in peace”?

Explain this comparison: “as you now behold me and know that I am, even so shall ye come unto me and your souls shall live.”

What does it mean for a person's redemption to be perfected?
What meaning of the word *perfect* is at work in that idea?

Verses 47–50: When will these events occur?

Who are “they that have watched for iniquity” (verse 50)?
Does that contrast with those who have looked for the Lord (verse 44)? If so, does that contrast help explain who has looked for his coming?

Verses 52–53: Does the Lord ascribe his execution to the Jews in these verses? Can you explain your answer? The New Testament makes it clear that it was, for the most part, a few within a particular sect of Judaism at the time and some (not all) Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus and who conspired with the Romans to have him executed. Why, then, does the Lord say “they persecuted their king,” as if all the Jews of his day took part? Are all responsible in some way for the acts of some?

Verses 56–59: When will this happen? Can you explain how you came to that answer?

Explain the events prophesied in these verses in your own words. Why are they important to us?

Verse 63: Of what “wars in your own lands” was this a prophecy? How was that prophecy and its fulfillment one of the signs of the second coming?

Verse 64: Where were the “western countries” of the United States when this revelation was given?

Verses 65–70: Where will this New Jerusalem be? When will these events occur? Why are these events of spiritual interest to us?

Verses 72–73: What are the things that the Lord doesn't want them to allow people to know? They know about such things as plagues, wars, earthquakes, and strange meteorological events. The Lord says that he doesn't want the world to know "these things" so that the world won't know the works of the Saints. What works is he referring to? Why shouldn't the world know about those works until after the Saints have done them?

Doctrine and Covenants 101

Verses 22–24: What are the holy places referred to in verse 22?

The last half of verse 23 and all of verse 24 tell about an event to occur in the future. What is that event? Why does the first half of 23 describe that event as a revelation? What will be revealed? Does that usage of the word suggest anything about our usual use of it?

Verse 25: What does "all things shall become new" mean? (Compare 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 3 Nephi 12:47.) Why do all things have to become new in order for the Lord's knowledge and glory to dwell on the earth? Why would his knowledge be unable to dwell on the earth as it now is? Don't we have the knowledge? If not, to what does "my knowledge" refer?

Verses 26–31: If whatever a person asks for will be given him or her in the millennium (verse 27), why isn't it given to us now? What reason would there be for sometimes withholding now, but not then? Do verses 30–31 apply only to those born during the millennium?

Verses 32–34: Does “thing of the earth, by which it was made” mean how the earth was made, or by whom it was made, or something else? How would you decide between these possibilities? If it means how it was made, what does that suggest about how we should understand Genesis 1 and the comparable parts of Moses and Abraham? Does it say anything about how we should understand evolutionary science?

To what might the Lord be referring when he speaks of precious things above the earth, beneath it, and above it? Does “things that are above” refer to something other than “heaven”? Is there a difference between things “that are in the earth” and “things that are beneath”? Is the Lord perhaps using here a Hebrew understanding of the cosmos, in which the earth floated in the primeval sea?

Doctrine and Covenants 133

Verses 1–4: What is the difference between *hearken* and *listen*?

Why the several descriptions of the Lord in verse 2? How are they important to the theme of this section? Why these descriptions rather than some others?

What is the difference between “the nations that forget God” and “the ungodly among you”?

Verse 5: Do the two sentences of this verse say the same thing or different things?

Verse 6: What does the commandment to call our solemn assemblies mean to us? Is the Lord referring to the same

meetings that we now call “solemn assemblies” or is he using the term differently?

Why are we commanded to “speak often one to another”?

What does it mean for every person to call on the name of the Lord?

Verse 9: Obviously verses 7–8 are about missionary work. In verse 9, the Lord gives a reason for that work: so that the borders of his people can be enlarged, so that the stakes can be strengthened, and so that Zion can go forth into its neighboring regions. Do these each mean the same thing? It makes sense to say that the enlargement of Zion would result from missionary work, but how is it the reason *for* missionary work?

Verse 10: Why does the Lord use the image of the Bridegroom here? What does that image teach us?

Verse 15: Since every stake is Zion, today we understand leaving Babylon and fleeing to Zion very differently than those who first heard this revelation understood it. For them it meant gathering to Missouri and, later, to the Rocky Mountains; for us it means becoming a member of a stake where we live. Those who understood this verse when it meant that converts should gather in Missouri or the Rockies could easily make sense of this verse: they shouldn’t make that long trip without being prepared to do so. Does the verse still have meaning today? If so, what does it mean not to go to Zion in haste? What does it mean not to look back? Is this an implicit comparison to Lot’s wife (Genesis 19:26)? If so, how does that story help us understand the Lord’s point here?

Verses 16–33: When do these events happen, at the beginning or the end of the millennium?

Verse 34: Why or how are the things described in verses 16–33 the blessings of the tribes of Israel?

Verse 35: What does “after their pain” mean in this context?

Verse 36: Does this verse refer to Moroni? If it does, in what sense did he commit the gospel (as defined in the scriptures) to humanity?

Verse 38: Do we ever preach “fear God and give glory to him”? When?

Verse 40: Do we pray for the second coming? Does this verse say that we should? Does the Lord’s prayer (Matthew 6:9–13; 3 Nephi 9–13) tell us that we should? *Why* should we pray for it?

Verse 47: When people ask, “Who is this?” why is it important that part of the answer is “he who spake in righteousness”? To whom might this be an implicit comparison?

Verses 48–51: What is the significance of the Lord’s robes being red? Why would he choose treading the wine-vat as a symbol of his atoning sacrifice?

Verse 52: Why does the Lord speak of “the year of my redeemed”? To what might he be referring by using the word *year*?

What loving kindness of the Lord do the redeemed remember?

Verses 53–55: Is “in all their afflictions he was afflicted” literal or metaphorical? How do you decide your answer to this question?

What does “the angel of his presence” mean? Does it refer to a particular angel, or is it a way of referring to the Lord? If the latter, what is its significance?

Why does the Lord pity us? How did he bear and carry those of old?

Verse 54 speaks of Enoch “and they who were *with* him,” but 54 and 55 also speak of other prophets and “they who were *before* him.” Why the change in preposition?

Verse 56: What does it mean to “sing the song of the Lamb”?

Verses 57–59: Why is the gospel—the good news of the Atonement and of its implications for us—called “his everlasting covenant”? In what way is it a covenant?

What does it mean to us that missionary work is described as “reasoning in plainness and simplicity”? What might the word *reasoning* mean here? What does it mean for reasoning to be plain and simple? How does missionary work prepare the weak for the second coming? To whom does “the weak” refer?

The phrase, “the Lord’s errand” appears in scripture only twice, here and in D&C 64:29, where Newell K. Whitney and Sidney Gilbert are told that, as agents of the Church, they are on the Lord’s errand. What does the phrase mean here? Is there any connection between this use and that in section 64?

The verb *thresh* has two possible meanings, “to separate grain from its husk by beating” and “to defeat thoroughly.” Which meaning is intended here? What makes you think so?

Verses 60–63: What does it mean to say that the commandments “were commanded to be kept from the world in the day that they were given”? Why might some commandments have been given only to be withheld until the Restoration? What might those have been?

Verses 64–74: In verse 66, the Lord says that when he came to his own no one received him. When did he come to his own? Why does he use hyperbole, saying *no* one received him, when some did?

Why is there no one who can deliver those who have not obeyed (verse 71)? Is it because the Lord won’t allow anyone to deliver them or because it is impossible for them to be delivered? If the latter, why?

What does “they sealed up the testimony” (verse 72) mean? (Compare Isaiah 8:16.)

Verse 73 tells us that the persons described in these verses will go to outer darkness. Does that mean that he has been talking about the sons of perdition? Verse 64 identified the people to whom he is referring as those “that do wickedly.” That seems to describe more than the sons of perdition, so how do you explain verse 73?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 22

Doctrine and Covenants 89

This is the first revelation given after the School of the Prophets was organized. Is there a connection between that organization and this revelation?

As you study section 89, ask yourself what aspects of the Word of Wisdom you personally have difficulty with. Why? What is the ultimate purpose of the Word of Wisdom?

Doctrine and Covenants 89

Verse 1: The phrase “word of wisdom” appears in three other places in the scriptures—1 Corinthians 12:8, Moroni 10:9, and D&C 46:17—in sections that are clearly parallel. What might the use of that phrase here have to do with its use in those places? How is this a “word of wisdom”?

Why is this given “for the benefit of the council of high priests, . . . and that church, and also the saints”? Why list all three rather than just the church, since it includes the other two?

What do you make of the fact that for some time after this revelation was received it wasn’t considered binding on members of the Church? It was counsel rather than commandment. How has it become a commandment to us today?

Verse 2: As this verse makes clear, the Word of Wisdom was not originally binding as a commandment. How did it become one? When?

What does it mean to say that the Word of Wisdom is given, not only by revelation, but *by* the word of wisdom? Is it important that this is for the temporal salvation of the Saints?

Brigham Young said:

I told them [the Brethren] they could not draw the line between the spiritual and the temporal. All things were created first spiritual, and then temporal. Everything in the spirit world was presented as we see it now, and this temporal earth was presented there. We were in the spirit world, and we came here into this time, which is in eternity, nothing in the world only a change of time and seasons allotted to a change of being that makes it time to us. It is in eternity, and we are just as much in eternity now, as we shall be millions of years hence. But it is time measured to finite beings, and it is changeable, and we call it temporal, while the fact is it is all spiritual in the first place, then temporal, the spiritual, and made immortal, consequently you cannot divide them. (*Journal of Discourses*, 18:243.)

What perspective does Brigham Young's view give us on the Word of Wisdom?

Verse 3: What is “a principle with promise”? Are there principles that do not have promises associated with them? If not, why describe this one in particular in that way?

What is the implication of saying that the Word of Wisdom has been adapted?

What does it mean to say that it is for the weakest of those who can be called saints?

Verse 4: What do you make of the fact that this revelation was given “in consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of men”? What evils and designs might the Lord have had in mind? How is that related to these commandments about food and drink?

Verse 5: It is not good to drink wine, the Lord says. But current medical science says that, in moderation, wine is good for our health. If the Word of Wisdom is a health law, how do we explain that difference? What if the Word of Wisdom is not a health law? If not, what kind of law is it?

Verse 9: How do we know that “hot drinks” refers to tea and coffee? (See Hyrum Smith, *Times and Seasons* 3:799.)

Verses 10–11: What did the word *herb* mean at the time of Joseph Smith? The 1828 edition of Webster’s says an herb is “A plant or vegetable with a soft or succulent stalk or stem, which dies to the root every year, and is thus distinguished from a tree and a shrub, which have ligneous or hard woody stems.” Does that meaning change your understanding of the verse?

In 1833, when this revelation was given, it was important to use fruits and vegetables in season because they were considerably less nutritious at other times, due to storage difficulties. Is it still important for us to use them in season? If so, why? What does it mean to use fruits and herbs with prudence?

Verses 12–13: To whom should we be thankful for the meat we eat? Though we sometimes twist verse 13 in a variety of ways, the plain meaning seems clear: do not eat meat except in the winter or in famine. Why does the Lord make an exception for winter time? How do you deal with this part of the revelation?

Is it relevant to your understanding of these verses that for much of human history only the wealthy could afford to eat meat?

Verses 14–17: What does it mean to say that grain is the staff of life? What is the significance of the image of the staff? What mild drinks are made from barley? From other grains?

At the time of the revelation, beer and the like were considered to be mild drinks. But when the Brethren decided to make the Word of Wisdom a requirement, they decided to include those drinks among what was prohibited. Does that say anything about the way in which revelation applies to us? What does it tell us, specifically, about how we should go about understanding the Word of Wisdom?

Verses 18–20: What do these promises mean to us? What does it mean to receive health in our navels and marrow in our bones? Compare Proverbs 3:7–8. Are that verse and this about the same thing?

What does it mean to find wisdom? Why do you think this is what the revelation promises instead of something like long life?

Does “not faint” have anything to do with the same phrase in D&C 88:126? Compare Isaiah 40:31, which uses the same phrase, “run and not be weary, walk and not faint.” Does the passage from Isaiah shed any understanding on this promise? On the revelation as a whole?

Verse 21: Implicitly this verse compares keeping the Word of Wisdom to the children of Israel placing blood on the lintels of their doors. (See Exodus 12:21–23.) What is the point of that comparison?

Lesson 23

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Notice that section 87, on war, was given only a few days before this section, “an olive leaf . . . plucked from the Tree of Paradise, the Lord’s message of peace.” How is the message of section 88 one of peace to the Saints? (See what was happening to the Saints in December 1832 and January 1833.)

Some of these questions were also part of lesson 19.

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 2: *Sabaoth* is a Hebrew word meaning “hosts” or “armies.” (See Romans 9:29 and James 5:4, where the word is left untranslated, and 1 Samuel 17:45, where it is translated.) Why might the Lord describe himself with that title in this section, which is a message of peace?

Verse 3: Remember from previous discussions that the word *comforter* also means “strengtheners.” Does thinking of this section in terms of strength rather than ease or consolation change what it means to you?

Verse 4: Verse 3 says that the other Comforter is the Holy Ghost. This verse says it is “the promise . . . of eternal life [and . . .] the glory of the celestial kingdom.” How can the other Comforter be both of these?

Verse 6: All of this section is clearly connected to John 1:1–9 and 3:19–21, but the next several verses are especially

so connected. How do these verses help us understand the verses from John? How do the verses from John help us understand these?

What does it mean to say that Jesus ascended above all things? That he descended below all things? That he comprehends all things? The first meaning of *comprehend* was “encompass,” and the later meaning, “understand,” comes from that. Might that earlier meaning fit this discussion?

What does it mean to say that Jesus is in all things and through all things? This verse says he ascended, descended, and encompassed *so that* he could be in and through all things. What does that mean?

The last phrase of this verse, “the light of truth,” modifies “that he might be in all and through all things.” In other words, we could read the verse to say, “Christ ascended above all, descended below all, and comprehends all so that he can be the light of truth.” What does that mean? (As you consider these verses, compare them to verses 40–41 of this section.)

Verse 7: To what does *this* refer in “this is the light of Christ”?

Verses 7–10: How is Christ in the sun, moon, and stars? By being “the power thereof by which they were made” (verse 9)?

Verse 11: Think about the phrase “which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings.” Does the word *which* refer to *light* in the first part of the verse, or does it refer to *him* (i.e., Jesus)? In other words, does this say that

the light we see is the same light that gives us understanding, or does it say that the light we see is given by the same person who gives us mental and spiritual light?

Verses 12–13: Notice that these verses define the light that fills the universe as God’s power, much as verses 7–10 did. Notice too that “the law by which all things are governed” is equated with “the power of God.” How are these—power, light, and law—the same? For example, what does it mean to say that God’s power and his law are the same?

Verse 14: What does it mean to say that the resurrection occurs through the redemption?

Verse 15: This is an important doctrine, for traditional Christianity has often denigrated the body, and because of that denigration our culture still often looks on the body as a hindrance (or, in backlash, it thinks of the body as the only thing). The privilege and acclaim we sometimes give supposedly intellectual professions over more physical professions is one of the remnants of this misunderstanding of the body and the spirit. In what other ways do we sometimes forget this necessary unity of spirit and body?

Note: though the soul is defined here as the unity of the spirit and body, it isn’t always or even often used that way in other scriptures. This definition is one that seems to be used only in the latter days. Therefore, when you read the word *soul* in scripture, you must ask yourself whether the writer meant “spirit” or “soul” as it is used here.

Verses 21–22: We sometimes speak of being sanctified through obedience to law, but verse 21 speaks of being

sanctified through the law. Is that any different? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Notice too that these verses speak of abiding a law rather than obeying a law. The word *abide* means “dwell.” Why do you suppose the Lord speaks of abiding or “dwelling” a law rather than obeying a law? What does the former imply that may be missing in the latter?

Verses 30–31: In what sense can terrestrial or telestial glory be a fulness, as each is called here?

Verse 34: What is the message of this verse? How does it square with the many passages in the Book of Mormon and in the New Testament that tell us we are saved by grace, not law? (See, for example, Romans 3:19–28, and notice the change Joseph Smith made in verse 24.) To think about this, ask yourself what the word *law* means? Does it always mean the same thing? Does it mean the same thing in Romans that it means in this verse?

What is the relationship between being saved and being sanctified?

Verse 35: Whom does this verse describe?

Verses 51–61: Can you give an explanation of this parable? To what does the phrase “these kingdoms” refer?

Verse 62: What does this verse ask us to ponder?

What does it mean that we should call upon the Lord when he is near? If he is in and through all things, when would he not be near?

Verse 67: Given what we've seen in verses 4–13, what are we promised if our eye is single to the Lord's glory? What does it mean to have our eye single to his glory? (Compare this verse with section 4, and compare section 4 to 2 Peter 1:5–9.)

Verses 76–77: How are verses 76 and 77 connected? For example, are they parallel in some way, or does one explain the other, or . . . ? In nineteenth-century English the word *doctrine* (verse 77) could also mean “message” or “teaching.” What is the message of the kingdom? In other words, what are we to teach each other?

Verses 78–80: We are promised that if we teach diligently, the Lord's grace will attend us. What does that mean? What is his grace? What does it mean to say it will attend us?

How are the things listed in verse 79 essential to us? Why should we need to know them?

Verse 117: In this verse, the word *therefore* seems to mean something like, “given all the things described in verses 87–116.” How are this verse and the verses that follow necessitated by the events described in verses 87–116?

Verse 118: Does a lack of faith, rather than knowledge, make teaching necessary? How would you explain that?

What does *wisdom* mean in this verse? (Compare D&C 131:6.) What are “words of wisdom”? What are the best books? What does it mean to seek learning by faith?

Compare D&C 90:15. Are these two scriptures recommending the same thing or different things?

Verse 119: What house is the Lord speaking of in this verse?

Verse 120: This verse begins with *that* meaning “so that.” What are we to do *so that* our coming in and going out, and so forth, may be in the name of the Lord? What does it mean to say that our comings and goings are in the name of the Lord?

Verse 122: Does this provide a model for teaching in the Church? What is the difference between this model of teaching and most other models of teaching? Does this model apply in more than just Church classes? For example, does it apply in the home? In priesthood and ward councils? Does it apply in primary or secondary school or in college classes? If you think it does apply in some of these other areas, can you say specifically how it does?

If you are teaching a class, ask yourself how you might use the principles of this verse to improve your teaching.

Verses 123–25: Notice that the particular commandments given in verse 124 are included in commandments to love in verses 123 and 125. Why? How are the commandments given in 124 related to verses 123 and 125? Are they part of the instruction for how we should teach, as in verse 122? Or is this a new topic?

Verse 133: What importance might this salutation, intended for use in the School of the Prophets in the Kirtland Temple, have for us? Is it relevant to Sunday School? To priesthood and Relief Society meetings? How? To our other educational pursuits? How?

Lesson 24

Doctrine and Covenants 26; 28; 43:1–7; 50;
52:14–19

Doctrine and Covenants 26

Verse 1: Why do you think it was necessary for the Lord to give the Prophet, Oliver Cowdery, and John Whitmer this advice? Why was the revelation given to those three in particular?

Verse 2: What does “common consent” mean in this context? What does that principle have to do with free agency?

When we raise our hands to sustain someone who was called by a priesthood leader, in what sense is that working by common consent? How does the practice of common consent help guard the Church against apostasy? (Compare D&C 107:84.)

In addition to saying that all things must be done by common consent, this verse says that all things must be done “by much prayer and faith.” The law of common consent is, clearly, a law about governing the Church. Are prayer and faith also principles for governance? How is prayer a principle of governance? Faith?

What does the Lord mean when he says “all things you shall receive by faith”? Does that differ from “you shall receive all things by faith”? How?

Doctrine and Covenants 43

Verses 3–6: We occasionally hear of some who have separated themselves from the Church, claiming that we have a false prophet or that they have another prophet who leads them in a higher law. What do these verses tell us about such claims? How does the Lord say that he will deal with things if the prophet were to cease to be his prophet?

Verse 7: To whom is this referring in speaking of those who have been ordained?

What does it mean to “come in at the gate”?

What are those referred to in this verse to teach?

Doctrine and Covenants 50

Verse 1: The Lord tells the elders of the Church to listen to what they will receive “according as ye have asked.” What that means is relatively clear. But what does it mean to say that it will be given to them “according [. . . as they] are agreed as touching the church”? And how does “the spirits which have gone abroad in the earth” fit into the sentence? Does the heading of this section help explain what the Lord is saying here?

What is the connection, if any, between the fact that this section is described as “words of wisdom” and that section 89 is called the “Word of Wisdom”?

Verses 2–4: To what kinds of spirits is verse 2 referring? Speaking of this period in Church history, George Albert Smith said:

When the Church was organized, persons came into it bringing along some of these enthusiastic notions, individuals who professed to have revelations on every subject, and who were ready to banish every moral principle under the guidance of false spirits. Joseph the Prophet had also to learn by experience, and to teach the Elders and the early members of the Church, how they should judge of the manifestation of spirits. . . .

There was a prevalent spirit all through the early history of this Church, which prompted the Elders to suppose that they knew more than the Prophet. Elders would tell you that the prophet was going wrong, men who thought they knew all about this work thirty or forty years some of them before the Lord revealed it, tried “to steady the ark.” The Church was constantly afflicted with such a class of men. (*Journal of Discourses*, 11:2, 7)

How are these verses directed at that problem?

Verse 5: This verse says that the alternative to falling prey to a deceiving spirit is being faithful and enduring. Is that a tautology—in other words, two things that mean the same thing (not falling prey to a deceiving spirit = being faithful and enduring)?

What does it mean to say, “Blessed are they who endure, *whether in life or in death*”?

Verses 6–9: What is a deceiver? What is a hypocrite in this context? Does the word *hypocrite* here mean what it usually

means, “a person who falsely pretends to have virtuous inclinations, feelings, or practices”? It is clear why deception is a terrible sin, but why is hypocrisy? Does verse 7 mean that deceivers and hypocrites are the same? What does it mean when it says “but behold such shall be reclaimed”?

Verses 10–12: Is the Lord using the word *reason* in these verses as we use it? What does he mean? (See Isaiah 55.) What does verse 12 suggest about how the Lord speaks to us? (Compare D&C 1:24.)

Verses 13–14: How is this message about the purpose of ordination relevant to the problem of apostasy, of following false spirits?

Verses 15–16: To what is verse 15 referring when it speaks of “spirits which you could not understand”? What criticism is the Lord making here? What is his promise in verse 16?

Verses 17–20: How do these verses answer the question that I asked of verses 13–14?

Verses 21–22: What does the Lord mean when he says “he that receiveth the word by the Spirit of truth receiveth it as it is preached by the Spirit of truth”? That seems to say that only “those who receive the word by the Spirit of truth receive the word by the Spirit of truth.” At first glance it seems to be a tautology. But surely the clause says more than that. What more does it say?

How does verse 21 imply verse 22? Why do those who preach and those that receive understand one another? Why are both edified, in other words, “built up”?

Verse 23: Can we divide everything in the world into those things that edify and those that do not? What about things like mowing the lawn that don't seem to edify but seem strange to describe as "not edifying"? I think some of us would say, "It isn't edifying to mow the lawn," though perhaps a few would say, "It *is* edifying to mow the lawn." To what kinds of things does this verse refer?

Verse 24: What kinds of meanings can the word *light* have in this verse? Consider what it means to receive more light, given each of the meanings you think of.

Verses 25–27: Of whom is verse 26 speaking—of a particular person or of anyone who has been ordained? If the latter, ordained to what? What does it mean to say that he is "appointed to be the greatest, notwithstanding he is the least and the servant of all"? Of what appointment is this speaking? In what ways is he a servant and the least? How does knowing what verse 26 teaches help us know the truth and chase darkness away (verse 25)?

How does verse 27 define what it means to possess all things? Does that understanding of possession differ from our ordinary understanding?

Verse 29: How does this verse repeat what was taught in verse 27? Does it add anything to our understanding?

Verses 30–31: In what sense is the word *spirit* being used in these verses? Can you say in your own words what the instructions in verse 31 mean?

Verses 32–34: What does it mean to proclaim against a spirit? What does it mean to do so with a loud voice if that voice is not one of “railing accusation”?

By what might one who uses railing accusation be overcome? How?

Why might we proclaim against a spirit with boasting or rejoicing? Why is it a mistake to do so?

Verse 35: This verse isn’t a complete sentence, but it isn’t obvious how it connects grammatically either to the previous sentence (verse 34) or the one that follows (verse 36). Taken by itself, the part of the verse that is between dashes is simple to understand: it is a blessing that the kingdom is given and that they have power to overcome anything not ordained by the Father. What, however, do you make of the first part of the verse? What does it modify?

Verse 36: Obviously this would have been important to those listening. Do we ever hear such a thing ourselves? In what circumstances might we?

Verses 40–41: These verses are addressed to those listening when Joseph gave the revelation. Are they also applicable to us?

When the Lord says “you cannot bear all things now,” what kinds of things might he be talking about, things they cannot bear?

What does it mean to grow in grace? Why must we grow in grace and knowledge of the truth in order to be able to bear all things? In other words, how do grace and truth help us bear things?

Verse 42: We don't believe in predestination, so what does this verse mean?

Verses 43–44: What does it mean to be in Christ or in the Father? Why is the preposition *in* appropriate here?

Some New Testament scholars have argued that the phrase “in Christ” depends on Old Testament usage, and that usage indicates that the person who is *in* another person is part of the other person's family. Would that interpretation work here?

Does the clause “I am in your midst” in verse 44 help us understand better what the Lord teaches in verse 43? How is he in our midst?

Why does the Lord call himself “the good shepherd”? What is the point of that name?

Why does the Lord refer to himself as “the stone of Israel”? What does that name teach us? How do we build on “this rock”? Is verse 43 related to Matthew 16:18: “And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”?

Verses 45–46: When will the day described in verse 45 come? How do we watch for it?

Doctrine and Covenants 52

Verse 14: The topic that begins here is “how to avoid being deceived.” How will a pattern help us avoid being deceived?

Verses 15–16: To be accepted, we must pray and speak in meek and edifying language, and we must be contrite and

obey the ordinances. The last two, a contrite spirit and obedience to the ordinances, are mentioned in both of these verses.

What does it mean to have a contrite spirit?

Are “accepted of me” and being “of God” the same? Can you explain what they mean?

We usually speak of obeying commandments. How does one obey an ordinance?

Why does our prayer need to be contrite? Why do we need to be contrite when we speak?

What does it mean to speak in meek and edifying language?

Verses 17–18: What does it mean to tremble under the Lord’s power? Does that have anything to do with being contrite? With obeying the ordinances?

How will we be made strong?

What does it mean to bring forth fruit? Is this a promise that those who tremble will bring forth fruit—or is it a commandment?

What does it mean to be overcome? Notice that the alternatives seem to be trembling under the Lord’s power, on the one hand, and being overcome, on the other. Why are both of these positions of subservience? Is this a pattern for bringing forth fruits? How so? What *is* the pattern?

Verse 19: How can we use this pattern to identify spirits?

Lesson 25

Doctrine and Covenants 84:33–44; 107; 121:34–46

Webster's 1828 Dictionary

Here are definitions from the *American Dictionary of the English Language* (this dictionary is available on the Internet), compiled and edited by Noah Webster in 1828. They may help you understand the reading better, especially the verses from D&C 121.

Though Webster's dictionary was not made according to the standards of contemporary lexicographers, and in spite of the dictionary's title, the usage references show that it often looks to British more than to American usage to understand the meanings of words. Nevertheless, it gives us a reasonable idea of word meanings in the United States in the early nineteenth century.

Use these definitions to think about what the verses from section 121 tell us. Do you see anything that you hadn't seen before?

BETIMES, adv. [be and time, that is, by the time]

1. Seasonably; in good season or time; before it is too late
2. Soon; in a short time

CALLED, *pp.* Invited; summoned; addressed; named; appointed; invoked; assembled by order; recited.

CHOSEN, *pp. cho'zn.* Selected from a number; picked out; taken in preference; elected; predestinated; designated to office.

2. Select; distinguished by preference; eminent.

COMPULSION, *n.* [Low L. *compulsio*. See *Compel*.]

1. The act of driving or urging by force, physical or moral; force applied; constraint of the will; the application of a force that is irresistible.
2. The state of being compelled or urged by violence.

CONFIDENCE, *n.* [L. *confidentia*; It. *confidenza*; Sp. *confianza*; Fr. *confiance*, *confidence*. See *Confide*.]

1. A trusting, or reliance; an assurance of mind or firm belief in the integrity, stability or veracity of another, or in the truth and reality of a fact.
2. Trust; reliance; *applied to one's own abilities, or fortune*; belief in one's own competency.
3. That in which trust is placed; ground of trust; he or that which supports.
4. Safety, or assurance of safety; security.
5. Boldness; courage.
6. Excessive boldness; assurance, proceeding from vanity or a false opinion of one's own abilities, or excellencies.

CONTROL, CONTROLL, *n.* [Fr. *contrôle*, a counter-register; *contre* and *rolle*, a roll, list or catalogue; Arm. *counter roll*.]

1. Primarily, a book, register or account, kept to correct or check another account or register; a counter-register. Hence, check; restraint; as, to speak, or to act without control.
2. Power; authority; government; command.
3. He or that which restrains.

DISPOSITION, *n.* [L. *dispositio*.] The act of disposing, or state of being disposed.

2. Manner in which things or the parts of a complex body are placed or arranged; order; method; distribution; arrangement.
3. Natural fitness or tendency.
4. Temper or natural constitution of the mind; as an amiable or an irritable *disposition*.
5. Inclination; propensity; the temper or frame of mind, as directed to particular objects.
6. Disposal; alienation; distribution; a giving away or giving over to another.

DOMINION, *n.* [L. *dominium*. See *Dominant*.]

1. Sovereign or supreme authority; the power of governing and controlling.

2. Power to direct, control, use and dispose of at pleasure; right of possession and use without being accountable.
3. Territory under a government; region; country; district governed, or within the limits of the authority of a prince or state; as the British *dominions*.
4. Government; right of governing.
5. Predominance; ascendant.
6. An order of angels.
7. Persons governed.

GARNISH, *v.t.* [Fr. *garnir*; Arm. *goarniça*, Sp. *guarnecer*; It. *guarnire*, *guernire*; Norm. *garner*, *garnisher*, to warn, to summon. The latter sense is still used in law language, and it would seem that *warn* and *garnish* are from the same root, for *warn*, written in the Celtic manner, would be *guarn*.]

1. To adorn; to decorate with appendages; to set off.
2. To fit with fetters; *a cant term*.
3. To furnish; to supply; as a fort *garnished* with troops.
4. In *law*, to warn; to give notice. [See *Garnishee*.]

KNOWLEDGE, *n.* *nol'lej*. [Chaucer, *knowleching*, from *knowleche*, to acknowledge. Qu. the sense of *lech*.]

1. A clear and certain perception of that which exists, or of truth and fact; the perception of the connection

and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of our ideas.

2. Learning; illumination of mind.
3. Skill; as a *knowledge* of seamanship.
4. Acquaintance with any fact or person. I have no *knowledge* of the man or thing.
5. Cognizance; notice.
6. Information; power of knowing.
7. Sexual intercourse. But it is usual to prefix *carnal*; as *carnal knowledge*.

NATURE, *n.* [Fr. *id.*; L. Sp. It. *natura*; from *natus*, born, produced, from *nascor*.]

1. In a *general sense*, whatever is made or produced.
2. By a metonymy of the effect for the cause, *nature* is used for the agent, creator, author, producer of things, or for the powers that produce them.
3. The essence, essential qualities or attributes of a thing, which constitute it what it is; as the *nature* of the soul; the *nature* of blood; the *nature* of a fluid; the *nature* of plants, or of a metal; the *nature* of a circle or an angle.
4. The established or regular course of things; as when we say, an event is not according to nature, or it is out of the order of *nature*.
5. A law or principle of action or motion in a natural body. A stone by *nature* falls, or inclines to fall.

6. Constitution; aggregate powers of a body, especially a living one.
7. The constitution and appearances of things.
8. Natural affection or reverence.
9. System of created things.
10. Sort; species; kind; particular character.
11. Sentiments or images conformed to nature, or to truth and reality.
12. Birth. No man is noble by *nature*.

REPROVING, *ppr.* Blaming; censuring.

SHARPNESS, *n.* Keeness of an edge or point; as the *sharpness* of a razor or a dart.

2. Not obtuseness.
3. Pungency; acidity; as the *sharpness* of vinegar.
4. Pungency of pain; keenness; severity of pain or affliction; as the *sharpness* of pain, grief or anguish.
5. Painfulness; afflictiveness; as the *sharpness* of death or calamity.
6. Severity of language; pungency; satirical sarcasm; as the *sharpness* of satire or rebuke.
7. Acuteness of intellect; the power of nice discernment; quickness of understanding; ingenuity; as *sharpness* of wit or understanding.
8. Quickness of sense or perception; as the *sharpness* of sight.

9. Keeness; severity; as the *sharpness* of the air or weather.

VAIN, *a.* [Fr. *vain*; It. *vano*; L. *vanus*; Gaelic, *fann*, *weak*; *faon*; void; W. *gwan*; Sans. *vana*; probably allied to *wan*, *wane*, *want*.]

1. Empty; worthless; having no substance, value or importance. 1 Peter 1.
2. Fruitless; ineffectual. All attempts, all efforts were *vain*.

VIRTUE, *n.* *vur'tu*. [Fr. *vertu*; It. *virtu*; Sp. *vertud*; L. *virtus*, from *vireo*, or its root. See Worth. The radical sense is strength, from straining, stretching, extending. This is the primary sense of Latin *vir*, a man. Class Br.]

1. Strength; that substance or quality of physical bodies, by which they act and produce effects on other bodies. In this literal and proper sense, we speak of the *virtue* or *virtues* of plants in medicine, and the *virtues* of drugs. In decoctions, the *virtues* of plants are extracted.
2. Bravery; valor. This was the predominant signification of *virtus* among the Romans.
3. Moral goodness; the practice of moral duties and the abstaining from vice, or a conformity of life and conversation to the moral law. In this sense, *virtue* may be, and in many instances must be, distinguished from religion.

4. A particular moral excellence; as the *virtue* of temperance, of chastity, of charity.
 5. Acting power; something efficacious.
 6. Secret agency; efficacy without visible or material action.
 7. Excellence; or that which constitutes value and merit.
 8. One of the orders of the celestial hierarchy.
 9. Efficacy; power.
 10. Legal efficacy or power; authority. A man administers the laws by *virtue* of a commission.
- In virtue*, in consequence; by the efficacy or authority.

Doctrine and Covenants 84

Verses 33–40: Here we see “the oath and covenant of the priesthood.” What makes it an oath? What makes it a covenant? Are the words *oath* and *covenant* used as synonyms here?

What is required of us by this oath? What is promised us? What does it mean to receive the priesthood? To receive the Father? To receive his servants?

Why can’t the Father break this covenant? What does it mean that the covenant cannot be moved?

How do these verses apply to sisters? Are the blessings described unavailable to women? Does verse 48 bear on this question?

Verse 43: What are “the words of eternal life?” How is giving heed to them the same as to beware concerning ourselves?

Doctrine and Covenants 121

Verses 34–36: We often quote these verses, but we less often refer to the first part of section 121, Joseph Smith’s prayer for deliverance (verses 1–6) and the Lord’s rebuke of him for that prayer (verses 7–33), a rebuke that also contains a prophesy of blessing for Joseph and destruction for the enemies of the Church. What do the verses for this lesson have to do with the first part of the section?

In the letter from which this section was taken, the two parts are not related, but they’ve been put in conjunction here. Does that conjunction as one revelation mean that we should read the two as having to do with one another?

(This section, with sections 122 and 123, is extracted from a long letter written to the Saints from Liberty Jail, Missouri, where the Prophet and other early leaders were incarcerated at the time. In the original letter, there is no break between the last verse of section 121 and the first verse of section 122.)

Verse 34: Compare Matthew 20:16. Does the context of that verse help us understand what the Lord is saying here? (Compare also D&C 95:5.) What is the difference between being called and being chosen?

Verse 35: What does this verse suggest is the cause of the unrighteous use of power?

In specific terms, how do we set our hearts on the things of this world? Is verse 39 relevant for deciding whether this problem is common among us?

Verse 36: What are the rights of the priesthood? Do they differ from other rights? If so, how? What does it mean to say that the rights of the priesthood are inseparably connected to the powers of heaven? How does having one's heart set on the things of the world and aspiring for honor cause one to miss this lesson?

Verse 37: To what does *they* refer in the phrase “that they may be conferred upon us”?

If covering our sins is wrong, does that mean we should uncover them, that we should announce them? What does it mean to cover one's sins? How does what is forbidden here compare with what is required in scriptures such as James 1:20 and 1 Peter 4:8? How could one use authority to cover his sins?

How could we use authority to gratify our pride? How could we use it to gratify our vain ambition? What is vain ambition? Is there such a thing as ambition that is not vain?

Does “control or dominion or compulsion” refer to three different though related things, or does that phrase repeat the same thing in three ways for emphasis? Is all control, dominion, or compulsion unrighteous? What makes control, dominion, or compulsion unrighteous?

Why is the Spirit necessary to authority? What does it mean to say that a person no longer has priesthood authority when he uses his authority unrighteously? The ordinances

he performs are still valid until his priesthood is removed formally, whether or not he is acting unrighteously. So what does his unrighteous dominion cause him to lose? What might that understanding of losing the priesthood tell us about what priesthood is?

Verse 38: The phrase “kick against the pricks” (from Acts 9:5 and 26:14) refers to sharp goads used to guide oxen. What might it mean in this context? Are these three things—kicking against the pricks, persecuting the Saints, and fighting against God—always the results of being left to oneself by the Spirit? How do they differ from one another, or do they?

Verse 39: Whose voice is speaking in this verse, the Lord’s or Joseph’s? If this is Joseph’s voice, what sad experiences might he be referring to?

What does the phrase “as they suppose” do in this verse? If it is true that almost everyone exercises unrighteous dominion when given what they presume to be authority, what should our reaction to our authority in our callings be? To our authority as parents? In the workplace?

Verse 40: Verse 34 begins with the same sentence that we find here, suggesting that the discussion of verses 34–40 is about the fact that many are called but few are chosen. How does the discussion that occurs between the first part of verse 34 and this verse explain that many are called but few chosen? Does it shed any light on what it means to be called? To be chosen?

Verses 41–43: Does the phrase “power or influence,” as used here, perhaps indicate that we should think of power

in terms of influence rather than in terms of control? Does the wording suggest that we *should* use these principles of righteousness to maintain power and influence?

What is persuasion? Long-suffering? Is there a difference between gentleness and meekness?

What does “unfeigned” tell us about the love required?

What is kindness?

What is pure knowledge? (What would *impure* knowledge be?)

What is hypocrisy? Guile? What does it mean for a soul to be without them?

In the phrase “which shall greatly enlarge,” to what does “which” refer? To pure knowledge? To the series of things that began in verse 41?

The last part of D&C 42:52 says we should bear the infirmities of those who have not faith insofar as they do not break the commandments. What might that have to do with what is said here?

Verse 43: What does *reprove* mean? What does *betimes* mean? (Compare Genesis 26:31 for a clue.) Of the several possible meanings of *sharpness* in Webster’s 1828 dictionary, which do you think most applicable to this verse?

If we are to show an increase of love after giving reproof, what must we have shown before and during that reproof? How might someone reproved take the reprover to be an enemy?

Verse 44: What does it mean for someone to know that your faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death? Faithfulness to whom? To that person? What are the cords of death? In this verse, to what might *faithfulness* refer?

Verse 45: What does it mean for one's bowels to be full of charity? The metaphor is very strange to us, though variations of it occur with some regularity in scripture. (See, for example, Genesis 43:30; 1 Kings 3:26; Jeremiah 31:20; Philippians 2:1; 1 John 3:17; Mosiah 15:9; Alma 7:12; 34:15; 3 Nephi 17:7; and D&C 101:9.) Can you think of a way to help us understand the metaphor?

What does the word *virtue* mean in this context? Do the definitions from Webster's dictionary throw any light on new meanings?

One older meaning of *garnish* is "to outfit" or "to supply." What might it mean for virtue to garnish our thoughts?

What are the conditions for confidence given here? If we want confidence, what must we do first? What is "the doctrine of the priesthood"? What does the last phrase of this verse mean?

Verse 46: According to this and the previous verse, what will bring about the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost and the other blessings listed here?

What is a scepter? Why might a scepter be mentioned here? What is a scepter of righteousness and truth?

What does it mean to have an everlasting dominion? What does it mean for a dominion to come "without compulsory means"?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 26

Doctrine and Covenants 42:6; 88:81; 112

This lesson doesn't focus on scripture, but it does refer to several (D&C 42:6; 88:81; and 112:19–22). Here are questions for those to which it refers.

Doctrine and Covenants 42

Verse 6: Why are those hearing this revelation commanded to go two by two? Are there several possible answers to that question?

Those preaching the gospel are commanded to lift up their voices “as with the sound of a trump.” Is that to say that they should be loud? What is the trumpet a symbol of in scripture? (Compare passages such as 1 Corinthians 15:52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16.) What do you think trumpets were used for in the first-century-AD Mediterranean when this metaphor first entered scriptural vocabulary?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verse 81: This part of the revelation was originally addressed to “the first laborers in this last kingdom” (D&C 88:74). Who were the first laborers? What justifies our using it to refer to us and our obligations?

Doctrine Covenants 112

Verse 19: The last part of this verse is a paraphrase of the first part of 1 Corinthians 16:9. Webster's 1828 dictionary says that the word *effectual* means "producing an effect, or the effect desired or intended; or having adequate power or force to produce the effect." How can a door be effectual? How does one produce effects?

Verse 20: What does "counselors for my name's sake" mean? How is it that the First Presidency were, as this verse says, counselors to Thomas B. Marsh? As the headnote for this section reminds us, he was president of the Quorum of the Twelve.

Verses 21–22: Today missionary calls come from the President of the Church. But it appears here that Thomas Marsh, President of the Twelve, was given the duty of calling missionaries, with consultation from the rest of the quorum. How much change has there been in the way in which missionaries are called? Is that change significant?

Those sent have power to "open the door of my kingdom unto any nation . . . inasmuch as they shall humble themselves before me, and abide in my word, and hearken to the voice of my Spirit." What does it mean to open the door of the Lord's kingdom to a nation?

Are humbling oneself before the Lord, abiding in his word, and listening to the Spirit three different things or three ways of saying the same thing? What does each phrase mean by itself?

Lesson 27

Doctrine and Covenants 101; 103; and 105

For more understanding of these sections, read about Zion's Camp in a history of the Church.

Doctrine and Covenants 101

Verse 2: What brought on the Missouri Saints' persecution? (Read some histories of the times to see what kinds of transgressions the Saints may have been guilty of. Also see verse 6.)

Verse 3: What does "I will own them" mean?

When is the day when the Lord will come to make up his jewels? What does that metaphor mean?

Verse 4: What does this verse tell us about verses 11 through 15 of section 98? There the Lord says to the persecuted Saints in Jackson County, Missouri, that he was going to test them to see if they would abide in his covenant. Is this a short way of saying the same thing? In what ways might the Missouri Saints' experience have been like that of Abraham? How were the promises that the Lord made in section 98, and the assurances that he gave there, fulfilled?

Verse 5: How does this verse help us understand D&C 98:11–15?

How do those verses in section 98 help us understand these verses?

Verses 7–8: What counsel had the Lord given the Missouri Saints that they ignored? (How, for example, had he commanded them to obtain land in Missouri and how did they get along with their neighbors?)

Verses 24–34: Why is/was this description of the millennium important to the Saints? (See verses 35 and 36.)

Verse 37: Is the word *soul* being used here as it is defined in D&C 88:15, as the spirit and body? Or, does it refer to only the spirit? What does this verse mean if we read the word *soul* to mean both spirit and body? To mean only spirit?

Verse 38: What does it mean to seek the face of the Lord? What is the point of that metaphor?

Verses 41–42: What was the essence of the transgression of the Saints in Missouri?

What does it mean for a person to exalt himself? What's wrong with it? How does it bring abasement?

How do we abase ourselves without groveling or implying that we are worthless in the eyes of God? What does *abase* mean in this context?

Verses 44–62: How does this parable describe what happened in Missouri as well as what will happen? Does it also describe anything else, something in our own lives perhaps?

Verses 68–75: What are the principles by which the Saints were to obtain an inheritance in Missouri? What does that imply for us?

Verses 76–78: How were the Saints who had been persecuted to seek redress? What might that say to us about our own difficulties? What does this say to some of those today who feel that the government or their community has been unfair to them? Why does the Lord want us to act in this way? (See the end of verse 78.)

Verses 81–91: How does this parable relate to the principles taught in D&C 98:23–31, where the Saints are given instruction in how to respond to their persecutions?

Verse 92: Why should we pray that our persecutors will listen to our pleas? Why not pray, instead, that God will wreak vengeance on them or that he will give us a chance to do so?

Doctrine and Covenants 103

Verses 1–2: To what is this revelation a response? What will it teach those to whom it is addressed?

What is the significance of the phrase “in my own time”?

Verses 3–4: Why has the Lord allowed the persecutions?

Verses 8–10: Why might the Saints fail to prevail?

Verses 15–16: What does it mean to say the redemption of Zion must come by power?

Apostates have often used verse 16, claiming it refers to them as one “like Moses.” What does D&C 107:91–92 teach about this verse?

Verses 17–18: How would you explain these two verses? To what does “at the first” refer? Of what significance is

it (in this context) that the members of the church are of the seed of Abraham?

How was the church in bondage? Are we in bondage today? What does “by power and a stretched-out arm” mean? (Compare Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 5:15; Psalm 136:10–12; and Ezekiel 20:33.)

Verses 24–28: What do you think those hearing this revelation expected to happen when they got to Missouri?

Doctrine and Covenants 105

This revelation was given just as the crisis between the Saints and the people of Jackson County, Missouri, came to a head. A storm had turned the Jackson County militia from their attack on Zion’s Camp. Consider that context as you read the revelation and ask if this is what you would expect the leader of a group of more than two hundred angry, armed men to say.

Verses 1–5: What does it mean to establish Zion? How does the establishment of Zion bring about the redemption of the Lord’s people? From what does it redeem them?

When the Lord speaks of transgressions, what does he mean when he says he is speaking of “the church and not individuals”? Has the church sinned in some way that the individuals in the church have not? What follows seems to speak of the transgressions of individuals.

What sign of the evil of the Saints does the Lord mention? What does that have to do with redemption?

What kind of unity does the law of the celestial kingdom demand of us? (In the D&C that phrase appears always to mean the law of consecration.) Why can't Zion be redeemed without that particular kind of unity? Do we have that unity today? If not, what would we have to do to get it?

What are the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom, in other words, of the law of consecration? How do we learn those principles? How do we carry them out?

Why is obedience so important to Zion? What does the Lord mean by the word *obedience*? What does he expect of an obedient person?

Verses 3–19: Many of those in Zion's Camp left the church afterward, disappointed that Joseph's prophecy hadn't come to pass and convinced he was not a prophet. How do you square this revelation with the revelation that ordered them to go to Missouri and redeem the land for the Saints? In other words, what could you have said to those who were disappointed?

Verses 23–24: The Saints to whom these verses were addressed had been forced to leave Jackson County, and many of their homes had been burned. What would this advice mean to them? What kinds of problems had the Saints had with their neighbors in Jackson County?

Verses 25–27: Of what is this a prophecy?

Verses 30ff.: How did the Lord want the Saints to acquire the land of Jackson County? Has that changed?

Verse 31: What will be required before Zion can be redeemed? (See also verse 11.)

Verses 35–36: What is the point of these verses?

Verses 38–39: What does *sue* mean in verse 38? What is an “ensign of peace”? How do we proclaim peace?

Lesson 28

Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–33; and 122

Sections 121, 122, and 123 are each part of a letter written by Joseph Smith from Liberty Jail to the Church leaders in Quincy, Illinois. Read about that experience in a good Church history.

Doctrine and Covenants 121

This revelation can be divided into three parts: Joseph's plea (verses 1–6), the Lord's reply of peace (verses 7–33), and instructions on the use of power (verses 34–46). We will focus only on the first two parts, but you might ask yourself what the last part has to do with the first two, if anything. The first two parts and the last were not contiguous in the original letter. Does that permit us to ignore their contiguity in the Doctrine and Covenants when we read this section? Why or why not?

Verse 1: What does this verse tell us about Joseph's emotional state? What is it like to feel that God is hidden? What causes such experiences? Is the cause always sin?

Does the fact that *the* prophet of the last dispensation feels abandoned by God say anything to us about our own experience and lives? Does it offer us hope?

Does this verse tell us anything about why modern Latter-day Saints place so much emphasis on persecutions in

Missouri, although they could have emphasized so many others, some equally as or perhaps more difficult?

Verse 2: Why is it significant to Joseph's plea that God's eye is pure?

Verse 3: Why does he assume that the Lord's heart has been hardened toward the Saints? What does it mean to say that God's heart is hardened toward someone?

Verse 4: Why is it important to Joseph's plea that the Lord is the Creator?

Verses 5–6: Is Joseph offering a “deal”: take vengeance on our enemies and we will honor you forever? If not, what is he saying?

What is he asking for in verse 5? Does that tell us anything about the place of verses like verse 37 and verses 41–43 in this revelation?

Verses 7–10: Compare section 122 to these verses. What does that section add to our understanding of them? What does the comparison to Job teach Joseph? The comparison to the Savior? What does each of them teach *us*?

Verses 11–15: Does the first part of verse 13 explain the calamities that will come on those who have charged Joseph with corruption? Why is the Lord talking about those people rather than the Missouri mobs?

Does it help to remember that there had been a major apostasy in Kirtland not long before this, as well as a significant apostasy in Missouri? The latter included members and former members, some of them prominent, who came to

the aid of the Missourians. How might that be relevant to what the Lord says here?

Verse 15 uses an odd phrase that I think is a paraphrase of a biblical phrase, “not one of them is left to stand by the wall.” (Compare 1 Samuel 25:22, 34; 1 Kings 2:21; 4:10; and 2 Kings 9:8.) Why do you think the Lord uses that particular phrase, one that we are likely to find mildly offensive? Whether this phrase is an implicit reference to that one, the contextual meaning seems the same: absolute destruction. What do we make of such a threat? Is it a threat to destroy the males of a community or everyone? Did the threat come to pass? If not, why not? If so, in what sense?

Verses 16–25: Why does the Lord rehearse this long list of calamities?

Who are the “little ones” referred to in verse 19? Are they the children of the Saints, or are they the Lord’s children, in other words, the Saints as a whole?

How do we understand verse 21?

Verses 26–32: What is the Lord promising Joseph in these verses? What knowledge was he yet to receive at this point in his life (e.g., the complete Book of Abraham, the ordinance of sealing, and so on)? Can you explain specifically what verses 28–30 promise?

In verse 32, what does “that should be reserved unto the finishing and the end thereof” modify?

Verse 33: Joseph has asked the Lord to stop people from persecuting the Saints, but here the Lord speaks of people trying to stop the Saints from getting knowledge. Has the

Lord changed the subject? Is he taking a different perspective than that Joseph took? How do you explain this difference between Joseph's concern and the Lord's?

Is the answer merely that verse 33 is part of a larger letter that contains all of what became this section, and more? If so, does that mean that we ought to assume that the selection, ordering, and editing of the parts of the D&C were not inspired?

Doctrine and Covenants 122

In Joseph Smith's original letter, from which both sections 121 and 122 were taken, there is no break between the last verse of section 121 and the first verse of section 122. What do you make of the decision to divide what he wrote into two distinct revelations? Does that decision put more focus on section 122? If so, why?

Verses 1–2: In the midst of suffering, how would this be a comfort?

Verses 5–7: Is there any pattern to the possible tribulations that the Lord describes? Consider each one individually. Had all of them already happened to Joseph or were some yet to come? Did some never occur?

Why is it a blessing to have experience? How can *all* of the kinds of things that the Lord names be for someone's good?

Verse 8: Is this a rebuke?

Verse 9: Given that this was received in Liberty Jail, what could "hold on thy way" have meant to Joseph? What does the promise "thy priesthood shall remain with thee" mean?

Lesson 29

Doctrine and Covenants 124:1–21, 87–90,
97–110; and 126

Doctrine and Covenants 124

Verse 1: What “offering and acknowledgments” has Joseph Smith made?

What does it mean for the Lord to tell the Prophet that he has raised him up so that the Lord can show his “wisdom through the weak things of the earth”? In what senses was Joseph weak? What does this suggest about *us*?

Verses 2–3: How is this commandment to make a proclamation an answer to Joseph’s prayers? The proclamation commanded in these verses wasn’t done immediately because of the difficulties the Saints were experiencing, but it was taken quite seriously. Parley P. Pratt finally completed and published the proclamation only after Joseph Smith’s death, in 1845, on April 6. For what purposes might such a proclamation have been intended?

Is it significant that the proclamation was published only after the Saints had already begun to make their plans to leave Nauvoo? If so, what does that say?

Verse 4: What is meekness? Can you give scriptural references that define that word?

What does it mean to write something in the spirit of meekness?

Verse 6: Is this one of the purposes of the proclamation—to call the president-elect, the governors, and the kings of the world to heed the light and glory of Zion? What are the light and glory of Zion? What does it mean to heed them? When the Lord asks the rulers of nations to favor Zion, what is he asking them to do?

The political leaders mentioned would almost certainly have looked at this proclamation as, at best, something to be ignored because it came from someone who was, in their eyes, insignificant. What likelihood is there that the rulers of the world would have responded had the Saints been able to make this declaration to them when it was commanded?

The US government's reaction to the Saints' problems may be indicative of how others would react: they ignored them. But if the rulers of the world weren't going to respond to the proclamation—if they weren't going to give heed to the glory of Zion, to prepare for the second coming, or to send money to the Saints—what is the point of the proclamation? If the proclamation had no hope of having the effect desired (and needed), why did the Lord give Joseph Smith this revelation?

Verse 7: How do you reconcile what is said here with the command to write in the spirit of meekness?

Verses 8–10: The first part of verse 8 seems to name another purpose of the proclamation, to warn the rulers of the world of Christ's coming. Why did the rulers of the earth need to have their hearts softened toward Zion? Is this something

that the Church still needs? What does “the exaltation or lifting up of Zion” (verse 10) mean in this context?

Verse 11: Is this a third reason for the proclamation?

Verse 20: Is “integrity of the heart” different than another kind of integrity, or is the Lord being emphatic when he uses that phrase?

What is the Lord’s testimony? Why does the Lord say, “for the love which he [George Miller] has *to* my testimony” rather than “for the love which he has *for* my testimony”? Is this just an artifact of Joseph Smith’s lack of formal education, or is there more to it than that?

Verse 21: At this stage in Church history, what was the primary responsibility of the bishop?

Verses 87–90, 97–102: What commandments are given to William Law in these verses? In what ways are these specific commandments to him? In what ways do they exemplify commandments for all of us?

What do you make of the promise in verse 90: you won’t be forsaken, and your children won’t beg for food? If that promise was meaningful to Law (as I assume it was), what does it tell us about his situation, his fears, his hopes? What does it suggest about the situation of the Saints?

What does this blessing mean in verse 99: “He shall mount up in the imagination of his thoughts as upon eagle’s wings”?

Verses 103–10: Why was the Lord telling Sidney Rigdon to humble himself (verse 103)?

What does “stand in the office of his calling” mean? Why did Rigdon have to be told to do that? Remember that Joseph Smith had refused to sustain him, though the Church did.

What might have counted as an acceptable offering (verse 104)? How would you justify your answer? What healing did Sidney need?

Doctrine and Covenants 126

Verses 1–3: These verses raise a question even more obviously than did the other verses recommended for this letter: why is it important for us to have a record of the commandments and promises made to particular individuals? What have they to do with our lives?

Lesson 30

Doctrine and Covenants 2; 124:25–55; 127; 128;
and Joseph Smith—History 1:36–39

Doctrine and Covenants 2

There are a number of variations of this scripture (e.g., Malachi 4:6, 3 Nephi 25:6, and D&C 128:17) where the word *heart* is singular, “the heart of the fathers,” though we would expect it to be plural, “hearts of the fathers.” In other variations (e.g., Luke 1:17, D&C 27:9, 98:16–17, 110:14–15, 138:47, and Joseph Smith—History 1:39) the word is plural, as it is here: “the hearts of the children.” Does this difference between the singular *heart* and the plural *hearts* tell us anything, or is it just an irrelevant fact?

In addition, in some of these scriptures, the Lord prophesies that the Lord will turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, in others he promises that he will turn the heart of the fathers to the hearts of the children, and in still others he promises he will plant the promises made to the fathers to the children in the hearts of the children. Which of these differences are significant? (It is relatively simple to make a chart comparing each of the verses.)

Verse 1: Does it mean anything that the Lord says he will *reveal* the priesthood rather than that he will *give* it?

What is the day of the Lord and why is it described as “dreadful”? Webster’s 1828 dictionary gives these definitions for the word *dreadful*: “impressing great fear; terrible; formidable” and “awful; venerable.” Which of these seems to be the one intended here?

Verse 2: Who are “the fathers”? To what promises made to the fathers is the Lord referring?

Verse 3: What does “utterly wasted” mean, “completely useless” or “made into a complete wasteland”?

If the priesthood weren’t revealed and the hearts of the children weren’t turned to the fathers, why would the whole earth be completely wasted?

Doctrine and Covenants 124

Verses 25–28: The Saints are commanded to build the Nauvoo Temple. What purpose was the Nauvoo Temple to fulfill? How did that differ from the Kirtland Temple? Why do we have to have a temple if we are to receive the fulness of the priesthood? What is the fulness of the priesthood?

Verses 40–41: The endowment is promised. What is the significance of the promise made in verse 41? Compare verses 38 and 41. What is the same in each? What does that say about temple ordinances?

Verses 43–44: What does this suggest about the relation of our efforts to the Lord’s work?

Verses 45–48: How might we apply these verses to ourselves? What does it mean to say that “we, by our own

works, bring cursings, wrath, indignation, and judgments upon our heads”?

Verse 49: Compare this verse to 1 Nephi 3:7 and think about how they differ. Is there a way to bring them into accord?

The Lord says that he releases from their obligation those who strive to keep a commandment when they are prevented from fulfilling it by others. (This seems to be a reference to the temple in Independence and perhaps also to the one in Far West.) But if the Lord knew a commandment would not be able to be fulfilled, why did he give it? If we were in a circumstance where we were no longer required to obey, how would we know? Isn't this an “escape clause” that I can invoke whenever it becomes difficult to obey a commandment?

Verse 50: What does this verse mean? Does this say that if someone doesn't repent, the Lord will punish his children and grandchildren? What if those children and grandchildren were repentant?

Verses 51–52: To what does the word *therefore* connect these verses?

Verse 55: How does this commandment to build a temple in Jackson County (Independence) square with the fact that the Lord has just released them from the commandment to do so and accepted the sacrifices of the Saints in its place?

Much of this section, especially from verse 62 through verse 118, consists of admonitions to various individuals about their families, lives, and responsibilities. (Many of

those people later apostatized.) Why are these admonitions important to us today? How do they help us? For example, how do verses 75 and 76, given specifically to Vinson Knight, say anything to us? How about verse 84? Verses 85 and 86? 87 and 88? Verses 104–10? How about the verses earlier in the section, such as verses 12–14 (to Robert B. Thompson), or 16–17 (to John C. Bennett)?

Doctrine and Covenants 127

The section heading describes this as a letter rather than a revelation. Does that change its status in relation to us?

If it isn't a revelation, then why is it canonized in the Doctrine and Covenants? We have different kinds of documents in the Doctrine and Covenants: revelations, official declarations, parts of letters, statements of resolve, and so on. Do we treat them all as equally revelations, or is there any distinction among them even once they have become part of canonized scripture?

Verse 1: This is Joseph's explanation of why he left Nauvoo: he was being pursued unjustly and he thought it best to leave for a while, so he gave authority to people to act for him while he was gone, and he'll return when things have settled down. Why is this part of our canon? Does it say anything to *us*? Does it tell us anything about how we can receive revelation?

Verse 2: What do we make of this verse? Joseph says he is used to persecution and trial, that his problems are but a small thing. But those problems include the loss of his children, the murder of some friends and betrayal by others

(most recently John C. Bennett), and great discord between himself and his immediate family (including a recent physical fight with one of his brothers). What does it mean to say that such things are a small thing? Is he minimizing the problems? Is this braggadocio in the face of more problems? Is something else going on?

What does it mean to “glory in tribulation”? How does the last sentence of the verse help explain Joseph’s attitude? How could we glory in our tribulations without being foolish or insane? Compare this to Romans 5:3 and the verses that follow. Are Joseph Smith and Paul speaking of the same thing?

Verses 6–7: We sometimes speak and act as if the things of this earth are only representations and symbols of heavenly things. What do we see here about earthly power? What might that say to us about the connection of heaven and earth? What does that tell us about our ordinances here on the earth? About work for the dead?

Verse 9: Sometimes we speak of our records as being records for the Lord. As we will see in the next section, they also serve such a purpose, but this verse says the records are so *we* will remember the things recorded. Why is that important? How do we remember our dead ancestors? Why do we need not only to do their temple work for them, but also to remember them?

Doctrine and Covenants 128

Verses 2–4: Though this revelation concerns the appointment of someone to record the baptisms of the dead, the

office of recorder described here eventually became what we call the ward clerk and the stake clerk, as well of course as the temple recorder. Why are such officers necessary to the Church?

Verse 5: Does this verse give an answer to the question about verses 2 through 4?

Verses 6–7: Here we see that in addition to the records being for our remembrance (D&C 127:9), they are that from which we will be judged. Why does the Lord need a record we have kept from which to judge us? In other words, why does the Father, who knows all, need a record of what has happened, and why does he ask human beings, who make mistakes, to keep that record?

Verses 8–9: To what does the phrase “this ordinance” refer? To baptism for the dead? To keeping a record? To the last judgment?

This verse implies that the words *bind* and *record* can be used interchangeably when speaking of ordinances. How can that be? What implications does it have for ordinance work? What implications does it have for our record keeping?

In what ways are things bound on earth? How, for example, are our families bound to one another? What has that binding to do with record keeping?

Verse 11: What is the subject lying before us at this verse, the question which this verse answers completely? How is obtaining the powers of the priesthood the answer to that matter?

Why does this verse speak of the powers (plural) of the priesthood, rather than of its power (singular)?

If the whole answer to the question of salvation is found in obtaining the powers of the priesthood, how do we obtain them?

Verse 12: To what does *herein* refer? How do we find “glory and honor, and immortality and eternal life” in that?

The end of this verse appears to say that the ordinance of baptism is instituted to be like the baptism of the dead and not the other way around. Is that right? If so, what do you make of that? If not, how do you explain the wording?

Verses 12–13: The prophet emphasizes the parallel between baptism, on the one hand, and death, burial, and resurrection, on the other. He mentions it here. He mentioned it in the previous verse. Why is that parallel so important? What does this say to us about baptism? About death? Why is that parallel at the center of our entry into the Church?

How many different kinds of death and resurrection are there? Make a list of them and see if you can cite a scripture for each that you think of.

Verse 14: What does it mean to say that the keys (plural) of the kingdom consist in the key (singular) of knowledge? What can the word *knowledge* mean in this instance? Knowledge of what? What kind of knowledge? In what sense are the sealing and binding powers the key of knowledge?

Verse 18: There must be a welding link between the fathers and the children or the earth will be cursed. Given what we’ve seen about binding, recording, priesthood, and so

forth, in the scriptures for this lesson, what might one say about the nature of that welding link?

If we understand the nature of that welding link, what might that say about our relations to our children and our parents? to our history? to our culture?

Is it important that here the welding link is baptism for the dead rather than the sealing ordinances, or is that just a result of the fact that this revelation occurs when baptism for the dead is the issue?

Verses 19–21: What is the point of this brief recitation of the history of the gospel and the Church in the latter days? How does it relate to verses 17 and 18?

Verses 22–24: Read this out loud, or have someone who can read aloud naturally read it. What effect do you think it would have on the audience? Why would it have that effect? How is what is said here related to what came before it?

Joseph Smith—History 1

Verse 36: What part of Malachi 3 do you think Moroni quoted? Might it have been something other than Malachi 3:1? Why do you answer as you do? Why doesn't Joseph Smith tell us more exactly what he quoted?

Verse 37: We've already looked at the difference between verse 39 and Malachi 4:6. What do you make of the difference between this verse and Malachi 4:1?

Lesson 31

Doctrine and Covenants 131:1–4; and 132:4–33

Doctrine and Covenants 131

Verses 1–4: What does it mean to say that marriage is an order of the priesthood (verse 2)? Is it a third order of priesthood, after the Aaronic and Melchizedek?

Why is the highest degree of the celestial kingdom reserved for the married? The Prophet Joseph Smith said:

Except a man and his wife enter into an everlasting covenant and be married for eternity, while in this probation, by the power and authority of the Holy Priesthood, they will cease to increase when they die; that is, they will not have any children after the resurrection. But those who are married by the power and authority of the priesthood in this life, and continue without committing the sin against the Holy Ghost will continue to increase and have children in the celestial glory. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 300–301)

How is eternal increase a blessing?

What about the faithful Saints who for some reason are unable to be sealed to a husband or wife in this life? What would you say to someone in that situation that wouldn't be "the same old thing"? Does D&C 124:49 give an answer to this question?

Doctrine and Covenants 132

Verses 4–6: Why is the covenant of eternal marriage described as “new and everlasting”?

What does “damned” mean?

How do we “abide the law” of eternal marriage? What does the word *abide* suggest?

Verse 7: Any covenant, contract, bond, and so on, that is not entered into and sealed by the Holy Ghost through the medium of the person whom God appointed for that purpose is “of no efficacy, virtue, or force in and after the resurrection from the dead.” How do we enter into a covenant by the Holy Ghost? How is it sealed by the Holy Ghost?

Compare the language of Ephesians 1:13: “You [Gentiles] also were included in him [Christ] when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed [in him] you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit [‘the holy Spirit of promise’ in the KJV]” (my translation). Are this verse and the verse in Ephesians talking about the same thing? For example, what do you make of the fact that Ephesians speaks of being sealed *with* the Spirit rather than *by* the Spirit? If the language here is intended to remind us of the language in Ephesians, how does the Ephesians verse cast light on what we read here?

Why do you think we need to have such a sealing performed by someone anointed for the purpose? Does verse 8 give us some answer to this? Does what D&C 126, 127, and 128 say about recorders apply here? How?

Verses 13–14: Do these verses suggest anything about how we should think about the things we do during our lives? Based on these verses, how might we decide what is important and what is not? Alternatively, how might this suggest we should go about our various works?

Verses 19–20: The grammar of these verses is complicated; it isn't obvious how to understand the relations between their parts. Here is my précis of these verses:

If a man and woman marry in the covenant *and* their marriage is sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise through someone holding appropriate priesthood authority, *and* if they abide in the covenant and do not commit murder, then:

They will come forth in the first or second resurrection.

They will inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths.

Their marriage will be written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

They will receive everything that the officiator has promised them.

They will receive exaltation and eternal increase.

They will be gods.

What does it mean to inherit thrones, powers, dominions, all heights and depths? What does it mean for one's marriage to be written in the Lamb's Book of Life? What is exaltation? Are these the same thing or different things?

What does it mean to say that they will be gods? Is this a new thing in a list or another way of saying the same thing that has been said in several different ways?

Verse 20 says, “They shall be gods, because they have no end,” and it uses “they continue” as a parallel to “they have no end.” What does it mean to say that they will be gods *because* they continue? Continue in what way? Does this verse help us understand what the scriptures mean when they say that we can become like God? Using what we learn here, what does that mean?

Verse 24: Why does the Lord use the plural here, *lives* instead of *life*?

Verse 25: Why *deaths* instead of *death*?

Verse 26: What does this verse teach? It is easier to understand than verse 19, but are there things in verse 19 that clarify this verse?

Verse 27: Consider Hebrews 6:4–6:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

How do these verses from Hebrews compare with this verse (27)? How does this verse clarify these verses from

Hebrews? What do the verses in Hebrews add to our understanding of this verse?

Notice what Joseph Smith says about the sin against the Holy Ghost:

All sins shall be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Ghost; for Jesus will save all except the sons of perdition. What must a man do to commit the unpardonable sin? He must receive the Holy Ghost, have the heavens opened unto him, and know God, and then sin against Him. After a man has sinned against the Holy Ghost, there is no repentance for him. He has got to say that the sun does not shine while he sees it; he has got to deny Jesus Christ when the heavens have been opened unto him, and to deny the plan of salvation with his eyes open to the truth of it; and from that time he begins to be an enemy. (*Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, p. 358)

Does that help us understand these verses?

Verse 31: In what senses are we of Abraham? Romans 9:3–16 offers one answer:

I could wish that I myself were separated from Christ for [the sake of] my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom belongs adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and temple service to God, and the promises; whose are the fathers [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob], and from whom the Messiah came in the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel, who are born into Israel: nor are they all children because they are the seed [descendants] of Abraham: but, “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” [Genesis 21:12]. That is, they who are the children of the flesh are not [in virtue of merely that] the children of God: instead the children of the promise are counted as seed. For this is the word of promise, “At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son” [Genesis 18:10].

And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived multiple children by one man, our father Isaac—the children being not yet born, neither having yet done any good or evil, so that the purpose of God in election might stand, not because of works, but because of his call—it was said unto her, “The elder shall serve the younger” [Genesis 25:23]. As it is written, “Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated” [Malachi 1:2–3].

What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Impossible! For he says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” [Exodus 33:19]. So then election does not depend on human desire nor on human effort, but on God who shows mercy. (King James Version, modified)

How does the passage from Romans add to our understanding of sealing?

Verse 32: This verse says, “Since you are of Abraham, go and do the works of Abraham.” What are those works?

Lesson 32

Doctrine and Covenants 135

This section is not a revelation in the usual sense of the word. In what sense might we consider it a revelation?

What is the history leading up to the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith?

Reading the Doctrine and Covenants we have watched the Prophet learn and grow line upon line and precept upon precept. (The gradual unfolding of the temple ordinance, beginning with baptism for the dead and culminating in the endowment and in celestial marriage is a good example of this.) How does Joseph Smith's death fit into this growth? Was it a catastrophe for the Church? Why or why not, and in what ways?

Doctrine and Covenants 135

Verse 3: John Taylor says that Joseph Smith has done more than anyone but Jesus for the salvation of men. Is this literally true or is it hyperbole (quite justifiable under the circumstances)? If it is literally true, how would you show that it is true? What evidence does Taylor cite for his claim? How do those things compare to the things done by other prophets, such as Lehi or Moses?

Verse 4: Given the many people who were angry with Joseph Smith at the time of his death—many of them members and

former members of the Church and some of them members of his own family—how can we understand what he is saying when he says that his conscience is void of offense toward all men? Does it have anything to do with the fact that he has a conscience void of offense toward God? How can we have consciences void of offense toward God and men?

Verse 5: What is a testator? Of what were Joseph and Hyrum testators? What does it mean that their testament is now in force? Is John Taylor depending on the language of Hebrew 9:16–17? If so, what do you make of the implicit comparison of Joseph and Hyrum to Christ? Why isn't Taylor being blasphemous in making that comparison?

Verse 7: An escutcheon is a shield or shield-shaped emblem that bears a coat of arms. An older idiom in English speaks of “a blot on one's escutcheon,” referring to something that dishonor's one's reputation. Is it significant that Taylor uses the word *stain* rather than *blot*? What does it mean that the escutcheon of the state of Illinois is stained with the blood of the martyrs? What point is John Taylor making?

Lesson 33

Doctrine and Covenants 107:22–24

Verse 22: What does “chosen by the body” mean? Does it mean the same thing today that it meant when this revelation was given?

What does it mean that the First Presidency is “upheld by the confidence, faith, and prayer of the church”? We speak of sustaining the First Presidency. Is that the same as upholding them? How do we have and show confidence in them? How does our faith uphold them?

Verse 23: Who were “the twelve traveling councilors” when this revelation was given, and has that designation changed now that we no longer have a standing council in Zion?

What does it mean to be a *special* witness of Christ? Are there also other witnesses? Who might the others be? Why does being a special witness make the Twelve different from other officers in the church?

Verse 24: Why is it important that the Twelve and the First Presidency are equal in authority and power? If they are equal in authority and power, how is it that the First Presidency presides? Are there other instances of priesthood holders or quorums that are equal in power and authority but one presides? What does it mean to preside in such a circumstance?

How might this relationship of equality and presiding apply to the relations of married couples?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 34

Doctrine and Covenants 136

Other than for its historical interest, of what value is section 136 to us?

Verse 4: Verse 2 spoke of a covenant to keep the commandments and statutes of God. That is fairly easy to understand. But what does it mean to walk in the ordinances of the Lord?

Verses 5–10: Were you to describe the principles implicit in the organization described here, what would you say?

Verse 18: What is Zion, as the word is used here? What does it mean to redeem Zion? (For other scriptures that talk of Zion's redemption, see Psalm 74:2; Isaiah 1:27; D&C 84:99, 100; 100:13; 101:43, 75; 103:1, 13, 15, 18, 29; 105:9, 13, 34; 109:51; and 113:8.)

Verse 19: What does it mean to build oneself up? What's wrong with doing that? How do *we* seek to build ourselves up? How can we avoid doing so?

Is the phrase “seek to build himself up” parallel to “seeketh not my counsel”? Why would someone who seeks to build himself up be powerless? What folly would be manifest? How?

Verse 20: By beginning with the word *seek*, this verse is obviously connected to the previous one. How do you understand that connection?

“Seek ye” doesn’t have an object. What should we seek?

Why are the instructions about keeping promises, borrowing, and so forth, in this verse and the verses that follow, particularly important to the Saints as they leave Nauvoo?

Verses 21–22: What does the word *vain* mean? In what ways do we take the Lord’s name in vain? What reason does the Lord give that we shouldn’t take his name in vain?

Why is it important to us that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why is it important that he led the children of Israel out of Israel?

What does it mean that the Lord has stretched out his arm to save Israel in the last days? (See other uses of the phrase “stretched out arm” in Exodus 6:6; Deuteronomy 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 1 Kings 8:42; 2 Kings 17:36; 2 Chronicles 6:32; Psalm 136:12; Jeremiah 32:17, 21; Ezekiel 20:33–34; Alma 20:20; and D&C 103:17; 121:33.)

Verses 28–29: What might these verses say to us?

Verse 37: To what does “these things” refer?

How does our present impurity explain why we shouldn’t marvel?

How might the promise of this verse have been a comfort to the Nauvoo Saints? How might it be a comfort to us?

Why might the Lord say, “keep my words” rather than “keep my commandments”? Do the words given, from Adam to Abraham, to Moses, to Jesus, to Joseph Smith, include more than the commandments? If so, what? If so, how do we keep his words?

Lesson 35

Doctrine and Covenants 4:3–7; 18:10–16;
52:40; 81:5–6; and 138:58

The historical relevance to this lesson is the experience and rescue of the Martin and Willie handcart companies. If you aren't familiar with that story, use the materials available to you and read about it. As you read the scriptures for this week, ask yourself what they have to do with that event. As you think about that event, recall this from President Hinckley:

Stories of the beleaguered Saints and of their suffering and death will be repeated again and again. . . . Stories of their rescue need to be repeated again and again. They speak of the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (October Conference, 1996; *Ensign*, Nov. 1996, p. 86)

President Hinckley might say the same thing or something very similar about many of the events of early Church history. Why do we need to repeat those stories?

A friend of mine once wrote a short tongue-in-cheek essay about the stupid things his ancestors (who were in the Willie and Martin companies) did. The point was to wonder why we glorify the Willie and Martin handcart companies when their story is a story of what happens when people make bad choices. If we look at the facts of

the story without romanticizing them, why *is* it and the other stories like it important to us?

What if we don't have pioneer ancestors? Is it still important to us? How might it be?

Doctrine and Covenants 4

Verse 3: Why is having the desire to serve God enough to make us called to the work? What is “the work”?

Verse 4: Why is the work of the gospel often compared to reaping a field? How does the image in this section compare to other, related images in the scriptures? For example, how does it compare to the parable of the sower (Mark 4:3–8) or the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26–29)?

D&C 88:15 says that the spirit and the body of man are the soul. Is that the definition that applies here? If so, what does this verse promise? If not, what does the word *soul* mean here?

Verse 5: Why does this verse speak of both charity and love? In most cases in scripture, they mean the same thing. Are they distinct things here or is the Lord repeating the same thing in different ways in order to emphasize it? If they are distinct things, explain that distinction.

What does it mean to have one's eye single to the glory of God? When is my eye not single to his glory? Compare this qualification with the promise made in D&C 88:67.

Verse 6: As we did with D&C 4 (Lesson 11), compare this list to 2 Peter 1:5–9. What does that comparison tell us about the qualifications for the work and about the goal of

the work? Why do you think the Doctrine and Covenants implicitly refers to these verses in 2 Peter so often?

Verse 7: How do you square this verse with the fact that all of us have had the experience of asking and not receiving what we asked for? What does it mean to knock and to have *it* opened? In other words, what is promised and how do we obtain that promise?

Doctrine and Covenants 18

What do these verses have to do with things like the rescue of the handcart companies?

Verse 10: How do you think we should understand the word *soul* here, the same as in D&C 4:3 or D&C 88:15?

Why is the worth of souls great in God's sight?

Verse 11: This verse begins with the word *for*, as if what follows explains what was said in the previous verse. Does it explain that verse or does verse 10 explain verse 11?

Why is Jesus called by his title *Redeemer* in this verse? Why use that title here rather than another?

Why does this say "suffered death in the flesh" rather than "suffered death"? Does "suffered the pain of all men" mean "suffered all the pain of each person" or does it mean "suffered the pains that all men suffer"? How would you justify your answer?

Does Christ's behavior when he suffered in the garden and on the cross give us a type of what our relation to our fellow human beings should be? Can you explain your answer?

Verse 12: We often speak of Jesus’s resurrection making possible our resurrection. Here, however, we are taught that his resurrection makes possible our return to the Savior. What is the connection between these two teachings? Does the necessity of resurrection tell us anything about why ministering to the poor and the afflicted is so important in the gospel?

Verse 13: If we understand the word *soul* to mean “body and spirit,” how do we repent bodily?

Verse 14: How do we cry repentance to others?

Doctrine and Covenants 52

Verse 40: In what ways did Christ remember the poor, the needy, the sick, and the afflicted?

The word *disciple* and *discipline* have the same verb at their root, meaning “to learn” or “to understand.” As a noun, the word first meant “someone who puts his mind to something.” What does it mean that we are the disciples of Christ? How does helping those who are poor, needy, sick, or afflicted demonstrate our discipleship?

Doctrine and Covenants 81

Verses 5–6: How are being faithful, standing in our appointed offices, and succoring the weak parallel to each other? What do these things have to do with being faithful to the end?

Doctrine and Covenants 138

Verse 58: What does this verse have to do with the theme of our lesson?

Lesson 36

Doctrine and Covenants 48:2–4; 64:33–34;
82:10; 93:1; and 130:19–21

As with many of the lessons studied when we study the Doctrine and Covenants, the focus of this particular lesson is on the history of the early Church.

As always, however, these study questions are not specifically directed at the lesson, but at the scriptures used in the lesson. Though true for the materials for all the lessons, it is more obvious in this case: the questions may help you with parts of class discussion, but they are not designed to supply all of the material for a lesson. These are scripture study notes rather than lesson preparation notes.

Doctrine and Covenants 48

Verse 2: What does it mean to keep the commandments “in death”? What does it mean to be faithful in tribulation? Why is a person’s reward greater if he or she has been faithful in tribulation? Does that mean that our rewards are concomitant with the suffering we have experienced? If so, doesn’t that suggest that we should seek suffering? If not, what is the relation between suffering and reward?

Verse 3: Does the first clause suggest that there will be a time when we will be able to behold the design of God with our natural eyes?

Verse 4: Does “after much tribulation come the blessings” mean that we can expect tribulation before blessings or that we can expect blessings if we have tribulation? What is the difference between those two? How does the meaning of each change our outlook on tribulation?

Doctrine and Covenants 64

Verse 33: What kinds of weariness do we experience in well-doing? For example, what makes a Relief Society president or a bishop weary? A visiting teacher or home teacher? How can one avoid or overcome that kind of weariness?

It is not difficult to see how “out of small things proceedeth that which is great” describes the Restoration. What other kinds of applications might it have?

Verse 34: What does *heart* mean in most scripture? Does it have that same meaning here?

Why must our hearts be willing as well as obedient? Is there a difference? If I do what is commanded but not with a willing heart, am I genuinely obedient? Is Moroni 7:6–10 relevant?

What did it mean to the early Saints to eat the good of the land? Does it mean the same thing to us? How is that metaphor significant?

Doctrine and Covenants 82

Verse 10: What is it that binds the Lord when we obey, our obedience or his character? To what is he bound? What promise do we have if we obey?

Doctrine and Covenants 93

Verse 1: What does it mean to forsake sins? Can we do this one at a time, or does it require something different, forsaking sin as well as individual sins?

What does it mean to call on the name of Jesus? How do we do so? For what do we call when we call on him?

Is it significant that he speaks of obeying his *voice* rather than his commandments?

What is the significance of seeing his face? Won't everyone see it, at least at the judgment? What is the significance of knowing that he is?

Doctrine and Covenants 130

Verse 19: Is this verse speaking of knowledge in general or of knowledge of salvation? How are diligence and obedience relevant to gaining knowledge? What advantage in the hereafter is being referred to?

Verses 20–21: How do we square this verse with scriptures such as Matthew 5:44–45:

Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may

be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

Are verse 19, on the one hand, and verses 20–21, on the other, scriptures on the same theme, or do they take up different topics?

Lesson 37

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 20:21–26; 21:1, 4–6;
43:2; 68:3–4; 101:43–54; and 107:22, 91–92

Doctrine and Covenants 1

Verse 38: What is his word that will not pass away? How can a word be fulfilled? How can it be fulfilled by someone speaking? By a voice? What does it mean to say that the words of the Lord will be fulfilled? In the case of prophecy of future events, the answer is clear, but what about in other cases, such as when he gives commandments?

Doctrine and Covenants 20

Verses 21–26: Why does a section devoted mostly to priesthood duties begin with this testimony?

Verse 21: The word *wherefore* means something like “because of this.” Because of what?

Verse 22: What does it mean to suffer (allow, permit) temptation, if he gave it no heed?

Verses 23–35: Some have suggested that this could have stood as a creed for early Mormons. (A creed is a formal statement of beliefs.) There are many ways in which these verses look similar to the creed of other churches. Yet Joseph Smith insisted that we have no creed. He said, for example, “the creeds set up stakes, & say hitherto shalt thou come, & no further.—which I cannot subscribe to” (Ehat

and Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith*, p. 256). How do you explain these verses if they aren't a creed?

Verses 23–28: This is a long and complex sentence. What is it about? Can you give a paraphrase? How are the ideas of each verse related to the ideas of the verses before and after? For example, verse 25 begins with the word *that*, which seems to mean “so that.” That suggests that verses 23 and 24 explain verse 25. How are verses 26–28 related to verse 25? How is verse 28 related to verse 27?

Verses 23–24: Why is this important for us to know?

Why does this mention the crucifixion, but not the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Verse 25: Why aren't ordinances or good works mentioned in this verse?

Verses 26–27: To be saved, those who came before Christ must have believed in the words of the prophets, spoken as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost. Those who come after must believe in the gifts and callings of God by the Holy Ghost. How are these two the same, assuming that they are?

Ought we to assume that they are the same? If they aren't the same, why are the requirements for those who came before the meridian of time different than those for people who came afterwards?

Doctrine and Covenants 21

Verse 1: What does each of these designations of the Prophet Joseph mean: seer, translator, prophet, apostle, elder? Do they all apply to the present prophet? How so or why not?

What does it mean to say that the prophet is prophet through the will of God the Father? What does it mean to say that he is prophet through the grace of Jesus Christ?

Verses 4–6: What does it mean to heed something? How is that different from listening to it?

Why are we admonished to receive his word “in all patience and faith”?

Doctrine and Covenants 43

Verse 2: Has anyone beside the prophet been appointed to receive commandments and revelations from the Lord? If so, who and how?

Doctrine and Covenants 68

Verses 3–4: Whom do these verses describe? What does this doctrine require of us?

Verse 4: *Will, mind, word, voice*, and “power of God unto salvation” are grammatically parallel here. In this context, do they mean the same, or does each mean something different. If they mean the same, how do we understand the will, mind, word, voice, and power of God to save to be the same thing? If different, to what does each refer?

Doctrine and Covenants 101

Verses 43–54: Why does the Lord employ a parable here? Sometimes he reveals his word straightforwardly, as a commandment, for example, or as an explanation. Why not do

so here? Is there something that a parable can do that more straightforward language doesn't do?

Who is the watchman on the tower? How do we fail to build the tower? How does this parable teach the will of the Lord "concerning the redemption of Zion" (verse 43)?

Does the workers' "variance" with one another cause them to be slothful?

Verses 55–62: What does the rest of the parable, the part not assigned for this lesson, teach? Is it about taking revenge on enemies, for example?

Verse 61: Explain what this verse says. Is the part of the sentence after the dash a description of the servant to whom the lord is speaking, or does it tell us what the lord of the vineyard is promising as a "seal and blessing"?

Do the words *seal* and *blessing* mean the same thing in this verse? If so, explain how they do. If not, what does each mean?

Doctrine and Covenants 107

Verse 22: What sustains the quorum of the Presidency of the Church? How so?

Verses 91–92: Why does the Lord compare the present-day prophet to Moses? How is he like Moses?

Lesson 38

Doctrine and Covenants 38:30; 42:30–31, 42;
44:6; 52:40; 56:16–20; 58:26–28;
88:123–25; and 104:13–18

Doctrine and Covenants 38

Verse 30: To what does “these things” refer?

How do we treasure up wisdom in our bosoms? (What is wisdom?) How would the wickedness of men reveal the same things to us that the Lord is revealing here? How would treasuring up wisdom prevent the wickedness of men from revealing these things? What does it mean that the wickedness of men would reveal it with a voice louder than that which will shake the earth? (What voice is it that will shake the earth?)

We are told that if we are prepared, we need not fear. Specifically, what things might we fear and how can we prepare for them? (What things has this section warned us of and what has it recommended? Those are the things we might fear and the things we must do to prepare.)

Doctrine and Covenants 42

Verses 30–31: The word *consecrate* means “to devote something as sacred,” “to give something to God.” Why is

it important that what we give for the support of the poor be consecrated? How do we consecrate something?

In speaking of consecrating of our substance “with a covenant and a deed which cannot be broken,” verse 30 clearly has reference to the law of consecration, which we do not practice today as it was practiced in the nineteenth century. But does this verse have a meaning for us anyway? If so, in what way? If not, how are we no longer under this obligation?

Doctrine and Covenants 42

Verse 42: The idea of “idle poor” seems to have a relatively recent origin, probably in the twentieth century, because in previous times it was difficult for most poor people to be idle and survive. But if this verse doesn’t refer to class of people whom we might call “the idle poor,” to whom does it refer? In the early nineteenth century and in earlier times, what kinds of people would usually have been idle?

How might we “translate” the meaning of this scripture for our own understanding and circumstances? (To see a warning to the poor, see D&C 56:17.)

Doctrine and Covenants 52

Verse 40: What does the word *disciple* mean literally? Why does not caring for the poor and the needy and the sick and the afflicted disqualify us as disciples in that sense?

Doctrine and Covenants 56

Verse 16–20: Here are a cursing on the rich and a cursing on the poor—and a blessing on the poor. Why do you think the Lord didn’t include a blessing on the rich?

Verse 16: What does it mean to have a cankered soul? What is the significance of the lament at the end of the verse?

Verse 17: Why are so many more warnings given to the poor than to the rich?

Verse 18: This verse says the fatness of the earth belongs to the poor who are pure in heart, etc. Why to the poor who have those qualities rather than simply to those people who have those qualities, poor or not?

Verses 19–20: As it is used here, what does the word *recompense* mean? Notice that rather than speaking of the Lord giving recompense, this verse says “his recompense shall be with him.” What things might we infer from that phrasing?

Why does he say the poor will rejoice?

Why will the descendants of the poor inherit the earth?

Doctrine and Covenants 58

Verse 26: We usually think of sloth as laziness, and we don’t usually think of those who do only what they are required to do as lazy. Usually we think of the lazy as those who don’t even do what they are supposed to do. Why is someone who has to be commanded in everything slothful?

Why don't we receive a reward if we only do what we are commanded to do? Couldn't we complain, "I did everything I was commanded to do"?

Verse 27: What does it mean to be *anxiously* engaged? Why is this singular, "a good cause," rather than plural, "good causes"?

Does this verse suggest that if we do only what we are commanded, then we do not bring forth much righteousness? Why does bringing forth much righteousness require that we do many things of our own free will? How do we balance the requirement that we do many things on our own, that we go beyond doing what is commanded, with warnings not to look beyond the mark or steady the ark (D&C 85:8)?

Verse 28: This verse says that "the power is in them." What power is in us?

Webster's 1828 dictionary says that an agent is "one that exerts power, or has the power to act." How does that help us understand the claim that men "are agents unto themselves"?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verses 123–25: Notice that the specific commandments given in verse 124 are enclosed in commandments to love in verses 123 and 125. Why? How are the commandments given in 124 related to verses 123 and 125?

Verse 123: Does this verse imply a connection between love, not being covetous, and learning to give one another what the gospel requires? If so, what might that connection be?

Why does the verse use the word *impart* rather than “give”? Webster’s 1828 dictionary gives these definitions for the word *impart*: “1. To give, grant or communicate; to bestow on another a share or portion of something. . . . 2. To grant; to give; to confer. . . . 3. To communicate the knowledge of something; to make known; to show by words or tokens.” Which of these are most relevant to the meaning of this verse? Are any irrelevant?

Doctrine and Covenants 104

Verses 13–18: Like the verses in section 42, these verses are about the law of consecration. How is that law relevant to us? What are our stewardships, and how do we account for them?

Verse 14: Is it significant that the Lord says that he *built* the earth rather than that he *created* it? If so, does that significance change the meaning of these verses at all?

Verse 16: The Lord says that we must provide for the poor in the Lord’s way. What is that way as he describes it here? What does it mean to exalt the poor and make the rich low?

Verse 17: If there is enough in the earth to spare, why are so many people impoverished?

How do we decide when we have imparted enough of our portion of the Lord’s abundance to the poor?

Verse 18: Can you say in practical terms what this verse warns? Can you say, specifically, how this puts us in danger—and of what?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 39

1 Peter 4:6; Doctrine and Covenants 2; 110:13–16;
Joseph Smith—History 1:38–39

1 Peter 4

Verse 6: Why is the first clause of this verse in the past tense?

To what preaching is Peter referring? Are the dead referred to in this verse the same as “the spirits in prison” mentioned in 1 Peter 3:19? How do you know?

To what does “judged according to men in the flesh” refer? Is it talking about the judgments that came upon these people while they were alive? If not, why not?

What could it mean to “live according to God in the spirit”?

Malachi 4; Doctrine and Covenants 2;
110; and Joseph Smith—History 1

These scriptures are all variations of each other. To think about those, look at this side-by-side comparison of the four scriptures. Then consider some of the questions that follow.

Malachi 4:5–6

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

***Doctrine and Covenants
2:1–3***

Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to the fathers.

If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

***Joseph Smith—History
1:38–39***

Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.

And he shall plant in the hearts of the children the promises made to the fathers, and the hearts of the children shall turn to their fathers. If it were not so, the whole earth would be utterly wasted at his coming.

***Doctrine and Covenants
110:14–15***

Behold, the time has fully come, which was spoken of by the mouth of Malachi—testifying that he [Elijah] should be sent, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord come—

To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest the whole earth be smitten with a curse.

The Hebrew word translated “curse” means “an order to set something aside to be destroyed.” For example, one can imagine a mother saying, “Throw that banana peel in the compost can.” Using the word *curse* as it is used in Malachi 4:6, we could say that she had uttered a curse on it, ordering that it be set aside to be destroyed in the compost heap. Does that meaning shed any further light on how we can understand D&C 110:15?

Joseph Smith—History 1

Verses 38–39: Moroni gives a different version of Malachi here. Why do you think that might be so? Does the pronoun *I* in this verse refer to Moroni or is he speaking as the Lord? How would you decide?

What does the verb *plant* suggest about what Elijah will do and how what he does will affect us?

What promises were made to the fathers? By whom? Where do we find those promises? Why would having those promises in their hearts turn the children toward their fathers? Is Moroni talking about ancient covenants here? If so, which one or ones?

Why is this promise made in conjunction with the promise that the priesthood will be revealed, as if the two were expressions of the same thing? Is Moroni making a direct connection between the turning of the children’s hearts to the fathers and the revelation of the priesthood? What is that connection? Is it any more than that we must have the priesthood in order to carry out proxy ordinances for the dead?

In what ways will the day when the Lord comes be great? In what ways will it be dreadful? Webster's 1828 dictionary gives two definitions of *dreadful*, "impressing great fear" and "awful; venerable." Which do you think is intended in this verse?

When the speaker says, "If it were not so," to what does *it* refer: to the revelation of the priesthood or to planting the promises to the fathers in the hearts of the children? How would you decide?

Doctrine and Covenants 110

Verses 13–15: Is it significant that Elijah speaks verses 14–16?

All the variations of this quotation in modern scripture follow this pattern—namely, that the hearts (plural) of the fathers will be turned to the hearts (plural) of the children. In Malachi, however, we are told that the heart (singular) of each will be turned to the other. Does Malachi teach us something different by using the singular?

What might the curse be that would occur were the fathers' and children's hearts not to be turned to one another?

Verse 16: What does *therefore* mean in this verse? It cannot mean that this verse states the logical outcome of what is said in verses 14 and 15. Perhaps, instead, it means "because of that." What is the connection between Elijah's coming and the turning of the hearts of fathers to children and children to fathers, on the one hand, and receiving the keys of this dispensation on the other? Are they the same thing?

Why doesn't this revelation of Elijah speak directly of the priesthood?

Lesson 40

Malachi 3:16–18; Doctrine and Covenants 85:9;
128:7; Moses 6:5–8, 46; Abraham 1:31

Malachi 3

Verse 16: What does this verse say that a book of remembrance is? What is being remembered in the book described here? Who is writing this book of remembrance “before him”? How does it differ from what the older people among us might think of when we think of the term “Book of Remembrance”? What is the connection between that understanding of a book of remembrance and the book of remembrance referred to in this verse?

Verse 17: Who will be the Lord’s? Who is this verse talking about?

When is the day that he will “make up [his] jewels”? What does that phrase mean? Another translation is “when I make a special treasure.” Does that help explain the meaning? If it is, what is the special treasure that he will make?

From what will he spare his jewels or special treasure?

Verse 18: What does *return* mean here? Repent, or something else? If something else, from where to where?

How is the judgment described in this verse related to the rest of the verses? Verse 16 says that the Lord knows about those who fear him and remember him, and he keeps a

book of remembrance of their names. Verse 17 says that those in the book will belong to the Lord and be spared as his children when the Lord makes up his special treasure. How is verse 18 related to that? What it says seems to be completely different: then (when?) you who have been spared will return (whatever that means) and you will judge between the righteous and unrighteous. At first glance that isn't clearly related to the previous pronouncements.

Doctrine and Covenants 85

Verse 9: Whose name will not be in the book of remembrance?

What does it mean to say, “they shall be cut asunder”? We believe that ultimately only a few will be punished by the Father, so this (and “wailing and gnashing of teeth”) cannot refer to something like we see in Dante’s depiction of hell. To what does it refer?

Doctrine and Covenants 128

Verse 7: Joseph Smith is explaining the meaning of Revelation 20:12. Though he doesn’t use the phrase “book of remembrance” here, he seems to be referring to the same thing we saw in Malachi, though with more nuance.

Why does Joseph assume that the record of their works must be a record kept here on earth? How is that record different than the book of life? If there is a book of life, why would we need any records here on earth? Does verse 8 shed light on that?

Moses 6

Verse 5: Is the book of remembrance mentioned here the same as that mentioned in Malachi? Why or why not?

What was recorded in Adam's book of remembrance?

Verse 7: Why is this comment about the priesthood inserted into the middle of a description of Adam's record keeping and how he taught his children?

Verse 8: In the phrase "this was the book," to what does *this* refer?

Is the genealogy that Adam kept, "the book of the generations of Adam," the same as his book of remembrance? Why do you answer as you do?

Why does Adam say, "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him," in (presumably) his book of genealogy?

Abraham 1

Verse 31: When Abraham speaks of "the right of Priesthood," what is he talking about? Why is it important that we know that he kept a record concerning that right? Where or how do we keep such a record?

Why is the reference to the ancients' knowledge of the stars part of the same sentence as the note that they kept a record concerning the right to the priesthood? The two topics seem unrelated, yet they occur in the same sentence. Why?

What benefit might Abraham's knowledge of the stars be to his posterity? He doesn't tell us about any identifiable stars, so he isn't giving them an understanding of navigation, for example. How is the knowledge that he gives a blessing to his children?

Lesson 41

Doctrine and Covenants 1:4–5, 30; 65;
109:72–74; 115:3–6; 123:12

Doctrine and Covenants 1

Verses 4–5: When the Lord describes the gospel in 3 Nephi 27:13–21, he defines it as the announcement that he came into the world to do the Father’s will: he would be lifted up on the cross so that he could draw all people to him in order to be judged. That announcement means, he teaches, that if we will repent and be baptized and endure to the end, our sins will be forgiven when he makes his judgment. That is a message of good news, of the gospel. Why then is that message so often accompanied by a “voice of warning”? Why is missionary work described as such a warning, especially when we know from Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–119 that though all will not inherit life in the presence of the Father, all but a few will inherit a kingdom of glory?

How is the term *disciple* used here? To whom does it refer? What does the word *disciple* mean? Its basic meaning is “a student of someone.” Does that add meaning to your understanding of what discipleship means for us? The word *disciple* is related to the word *discipline*? Why do you think there is that relationship?

Verse 30: To what specific commandments does the phrase “these commandments” refer? Considering the context of

this revelation and the specific commandments that are referred to, to whom have those commandments been given?

This verse has antecedent conditions. It begins “And also.” Is verse 30 the relevant antecedent: “my servant Joseph Smith, Jun., might have power . . .”? Or is this part of the series that begins at verse 24?

Is “true and living” a case of using two words to say the same thing, as the scriptures often do, as when they say “heart and mind” or “without form and void”? That kind of pairing of different words for one meaning is called hendiadys. What does true mean here? Living? In other words, what does it mean for an institution, like a church, to be true? What does it mean for it to be living?

Doctrine and Covenants 88

Verses 81: Is “testify and warn” a hendiadys? If so, how might testify mean the same thing as warn? Why does the Lord described being preached the gospel as being warned rather than, perhaps, being invited?

Here the word *becometh* means something like “is appropriate or suitable for.” Why do you think the Lord uses such relatively mild language? Why doesn’t he instead use the language of command: “every man must”?

Doctrine and Covenants 109

This revelation is a prayer. What does it mean for a prayer also to be a revelation? Does the fact that the verses we will

study for this lesson are part of a prayer change our understanding of them? If so, how? Or how not?

Verses 72–74: These verses are part of a long sentence that begins in verse 72 and ends in verse 76. How do the three verses assigned for this lesson relate to that larger sentence? What, for instance, is the theme of that sentence as a whole?

Verse 72: We promise to remember the Lord when we take the elements of the sacrament. What does it mean for him to remember us?

The prayer is that the Lord will remember the church and the people of the church, and their families and their relations who suffer, as well as all of the poor in the earth so that his kingdom may be established. How does the Lord's remembrance of the church and those in need make the establishment of his kingdom possible?

Verses 73–74: The last clause of verse 72 is part of a series of that-clauses which are parallel to each other in meaning. Verse 72 speaks of the establishment of the church and of it filling the whole earth. Verse 73 repeats that idea using images that come from other passages of scripture. In particular, the language of verse 72 comes from the Song of Solomon (3:6 and, especially, 6:10). Why does the Lord use the language of Hebrew love poetry to describe the establishment of the Church and its spread throughout the earth?

Verse 74 uses the language of Isaiah 64:1 and 40:4. Look at those chapters in Isaiah and ask yourself what their subject matter has to do with this prayer for missionary work.

Doctrine and Covenants 115

The lesson materials call for using only verses 4–6. However, since verse 4 is the second half of a thought that begins in verse 3, I have included that verse.

Verse 3: Why does the Lord address this to “all the people of my Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints”?

In 1838, when this revelation was given, where would we have found Latter-day Saints in any significant numbers? Given the limited geographical distribution of Saints at the time, why is this addressed specifically to those “scattered abroad in all the world”?

There were two high councils in the Church when this revelation was received, that in Jackson County, Missouri, and a “Traveling High Council” that later became the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. Which of them do you think is addressed in these verses? Does it matter?

Verse 4: In the name of the Church, how should we understand the adjective *latter-day*? Does it mean “in distinction from the first-century Church” or does it mean “of the last days”? What gives you the basis for your answer to that question?

Verses 5–6: Look back at verses 1–3. Whom is the Lord addressing when he says “I say unto you all”? What positions do each of the leaders addressed hold? Is that important to this announcement of the Church’s official name?

The image of persons “shining forth” comes from the Old Testament. A phrase similar to this one is in Job 11:17, although it occurs there in advice from one of Job’s false

friends: “thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.” Similar phrases are in Psalm 80:1 and Deuteronomy 33:2. But perhaps the phrase most like this is in the New Testament, Matthew 13:43, a prophecy of the end of the world: “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun.” How do you understand this image?

How is the word *standard* being used in verse 5, to mean “an authoritative exemplar of correctness or some other quality” or to mean “a flag or other object raised on a pole to signify the rallying point for those engaged in a battle”? Compare Jeremiah 50:2 and 51:27, as well as Alma 62:4–5.

Doctrine and Covenants 123

Verse 12: This verse begins with the word *for*, which tells us that it is the consequence of something else. What is that something else?

What does the Lord have in mind when he refers to “all sects, parties, and denominations”? Sects and denominations are groups of people who follow a particular religion. But how is he using the word *parties*?

We seldom think of those who belong to other churches as blinded by people who are intentionally deceiving them. In my experience, though, very few people belong to the sect or denomination they are members of because they have been intentionally “blinded by the subtle craftiness of men.” How should we understand what this verse says about the many people who are so blinded? Who are the deceivers?

Whatever your answer to the previous question, what does it mean to believe that many people “are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it”? What does that suggest about our responsibility for missionary work? What does it suggest about how to do missionary work?

Lesson 42

Doctrine and Covenants 1:38; 21:4–6;
28:2–7; 43:2–3; 112:20

Doctrine and Covenants 1

Verse 38: What is the rhetorical effect of saying, “What I have spoken, I have spoken.” The sentence is obviously true, but presumably the Lord puts it that way for a reason. What might be his reason?

What does the Lord mean when he says, “I excuse not myself”? When and how do we excuse ourselves? Is he telling us that he is not doing what we do when we excuse ourselves?

The structure of this sentence is somewhat odd. We usually read “whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same” to qualify “what I the Lord have spoken”: he has spoken what he has spoken, and it doesn’t matter whether he spoke it in person or through his servants. But grammatically the concluding clause of this verse appears to modify “my word shall not pass away, but shall all be fulfilled.” How would you explain that?

Doctrine and Covenants 21

Verses 4–5: To whom does the word *his* in “thou shalt give heed unto all his words” refer? Does it have a grammatical antecedent, or do we have to assume one?

Does “walking in all holiness before me” describe the seer, translator, prophet, apostle, and elder of verse 1: he will give us the words of the Lord walking in all holiness? Or does it describe those to whom this commandment is delivered: we ought to receive those words and commandments walking in all holiness?

Verse 6: Can you explain the metaphor “the gates of hell”? The phrase originates in Jesus’s teaching (Matthew 16:18; 3 Nephi 11:39, though Nephi also uses the term in his psalm—2 Nephi 4:32). As Jesus used the term, it seems to mean “the power of death”: the gates of hell stand for hell as a whole, and hell did not mean a place of punishment so much as it meant death when Jesus spoke to Peter. Once a term becomes part of scripture and gets repeated, though, its meaning can change. Is its meaning here the same as it is in Jesus’s usage?

If the meaning here is the same as in Matthew 16:18 and 3 Nephi 11:39, what does it mean to say that if we do the things commanded, the power of death will not prevail against us? What kind of death was Jesus speaking of when he spoke to Peter? What kind of death is he referring to here?

Note: We understand the word *disperse* to mean “to spread out over a wide area.” But Webster’s 1828 dictionary tells us that in Joseph Smith’s day it meant “to scatter; to drive asunder; to cause to separate into different parts” more than it meant “to distribute.”

What does it mean for “the heavens to shake for [our] good”? What is the image that the Lord is using here?

Doctrine and Covenants 28

Verse 2: How did Moses receive commandments? Do all prophets receive commandments as Moses did? How do you explain your answer?

Verse 3: How was Aaron obedient to Moses? In other words, what does this comparison of Oliver Cowdery to Aaron teach us?

Verses 4–5: What authority do these verses give Oliver? Is there anyone in the Church today who has a position (and authority) like his?

Verses 6–7: What are “the mysteries”? The New Testament uses the word often, and there it translates a Greek word that could also be translated “secret” or “secret ordinance.” What are the secrets of the gospel? From whom are they kept secret, and why are they secret? How do we learn them? What are its secret ordinances? Where do we learn them? Why are they secret?

Doctrine and Covenants 43

Verses 2–3: Why does the Lord say that Joseph Smith has been appointed to receive commandments and revelations from the Lord’s hand rather than from his mouth?

What does it mean to abide (“to rest or dwell; to tarry or stay for a short time; to continue permanently; to be firm and immovable”—Webster’s 1828 dictionary) in the Lord? How do we know whether the prophet is doing this?

Doctrine and Covenants 112

Verse 20: What does it mean to say that the Lord has made the First Presidency counselors to us?

Lesson 43

Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:29; 6:11–17;
2 Nephi 1:23; Doctrine and Covenants 27:15–18;
42:21–24; 51:9; 52:16; 59:6; 63:16, 60–62; 76:25–29;
97:8; 121:45–46; 136:21, 24; Moses 4:3–4

Romans 13

Verse 12: What night or era of darkness might Paul have been speaking of? What day did he see dawning? Reading this from our own position in history, when was the night and what was the dawn? Is that rereading of the scriptures from our own position and apart from the original meaning justified? Why not, if it is not? How so, if it is?

Ephesians 4

Verse 29: Because the King James English may be slightly difficult to understand, consider an alternate translation: “Do not let any evil talk come out of your mouth, but [instead] what is good for building others up as they need, so that [what you say] will give benefit to those who listen.”

Ephesians 6

Verse 11: Paul is using the metaphor of battle in these verses, so the metaphor of armor makes sense. What does

it mean that in this battle the weapons used against us are wiles, in other words, schemes?

Verse 12: Here is another translation of verse 12. It may help make more sense of it: “For we are wrestling not with flesh and blood [enemies], but with governments, with those who have authority, with the rulers of this world’s darkness, with spiritual wickedness in the heavens.”

If the battle is a spiritual one, what governments and authorities might Paul have in mind? Who might he be referring to as those who rule this world’s darkness, and how is that a spiritual battle? When he speaks of spiritual wickedness in the heavens, what might he have in mind? Does Paul have a particular enemy in mind, or is he describing the breadth of the spiritual battle?

Verse 13: What point is Paul making when he tells us to take “the whole armour of God”? Some translators believe that “splendid armor” is a better translation. What difference in understanding would that alternate translation make to you?

Note: There is a wordplay in English that translates a similar wordplay in Greek: *withstand* and *stand*. If we have God’s armor, then we can withstand the wiles of the devil, and if we withstand the wiles of the devil, then we will remain standing. In other words, we will not be defeated.

Does the phrase “having done all” describe what we have done to prepare for the battle, or does it describe what we do *in* the battle?

Verses 14–17: Truth, righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace (which means?), faith, and the Spirit (or word of God): how does each of these in particular prepare us to fight against the powers of darkness?

Here are some other translations of what the King James Version renders as “the preparation of the gospel of peace”:

“the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace”
(Today’s New International Version)

“the preparation of the good news of peace” (The
Lexham English Bible)

“whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel
of peace” (New Revised Standard Version)

“the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace” (Jerusa-
lem Bible)

“in readiness for the gospel of peace” (The New
American Bible)

Obviously the phrase presents translators with some of the same difficulties understanding the Greek that we have understanding the English. Looking at some of the alternatives and using your own ability to think about how best to understand the verse, what do you think the phrase means?

Why does Paul say that the Spirit and the word of God are the same? What does he mean?

2 Nephi 1

Verse 23: When Paul uses the metaphor of armor, righteousness is one of that armor’s components. Does it

matter to Lehi's point that he is using the metaphor of armor differently than did Paul, that for him righteousness is the whole armor?

Lehi's metaphor seems to come in an odd order. In the natural order, one would have to shake off the chains of oppression and then stand up. After that he could put on armor. Why do you think Lehi put things in this order rather than in the natural order?

What chains are binding Lehi's sons? In what sense are they in obscurity? Does the 1828 definition of *obscurity* help answer that: "darkness"?

In much of scripture "coming out of the dust" is a metaphor for coming forth from the dead. Is that the metaphor at work here? If so, why?

Doctrine and Covenants 27

As you read these verses, pay particular attention to how the Lord expands what Paul has written. What differences in meaning do those expansions create?

Verse 15: This verse begins with *wherefore*, indicating that what follows is a consequence of what was said in the previous verse or verses. How is what follows connected to what came before? Is it a logical consequence, for example, a consequence of righteous life, . . . ?

Literally, to gird up one's loins is to put a wide leather belt (a girdle) around one's waist (the loins). People did this to prepare for work and for war, as well as for officiating in

the offices of the temple priesthood. So what is the import of “lift up your hearts and rejoice, and gird up your loins”?

What evil day does this verse have in mind? Why do you think that this version of this injunction leaves out “that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil”? Why does it omit Paul’s claim that this is a spiritual rather than a physical battle, a spiritual battle against corrupt governments, authorities, and so on?

Does the phrase “having done all” describe what we have done to prepare for the battle, or does it describe what we do *in* the battle?

Verse 16: By adding “which I have sent mine angels to commit unto you,” this verse emphasizes “the preparation of the gospel of peace,” suggesting that the phrase is particularly important. That means that it is important to decide what you think it means.

Verse 18: Paul identifies the Spirit and the word. This revelation through Joseph Smith divides them: the Spirit is one thing we must take (and it will be poured out on us), and the word is another thing we must take. What difference does that make between the meaning of what Paul says and the meaning of what Joseph says?

Joseph Smith’s revelation adds, “be agreed as touching all things whatsoever ye ask of me.” If the Lord were Santa Claus, it would be all right that “Johnny wants a pair of skates; Suzy wants a dolly.” But the Lord is not Santa Claus. He wants us to agree as to what we ask for. Why is that necessary? How do we create that agreement?

What does it mean to be caught up? To where? How?

At what day is it important that “where I am ye shall be also”?

Doctrine and Covenants 42

Verses 21–24: These verses mention three sins: lying, lust, and adultery. It is clear why the second and third belong together, but why is lying included with them as the first mentioned in the group?

Is there a natural progression of these sins?

Doctrine and Covenants 51

Verse 9: Does “deal honestly” state the general expectation, with “be alike among this people” and “receive alike” giving us the specifics of what that means? Or are these simply three different expectations?

What does it mean to “be alike among this people”? What does it mean to “receive alike”? Presumably “among this people” is understood in the second phrase.

This commandment was given during a time when the law of consecration was being first taught and included the consecration of all one’s property to the Church. How do we fulfill that commandment today when, though we still covenant ourselves to live consecrated lives, we do not do so by giving all of what we own to the Church and receiving back a portion?

Doctrine and Covenants 52

Verse 16: What does it mean to be a speaker with a contrite spirit? The word *contrite* means literally “worn or bruised.”

How would we know that a speaker was contrite? Need we know that, or is it enough for the speaker to seek to be that?

What does it mean for a speaker's language to be meek (mild, soft, gentle)? Does that mean we should never speak the truth with power and authority? Or are the two perhaps possible at the same time? If the latter, how so?

What does it mean for a speaker's language to edify (to instruct, to build up, to improve)? Who should it improve, him or his audience?

What does it mean to obey an ordinance? What ordinances does this verse refer to?

Doctrine and Covenants 59

Verse 6: Why does the Lord pick the three things from the Ten Commandments that he repeats here: theft, adultery, and murder? Does prefacing those three with the second great commandment tell us anything about how we ought to understand the Ten Commandments?

Doctrine and Covenants 63

Verse 16: We have seen most of the content of this verse before, but what do you make of the addition, "but shall deny the faith and shall fear"? Why does the Lord tell us that an adulterer will deny the faith? Isn't it possible to commit adultery without doing so? And why does he add "shall fear"? Fear what?

Verses 60–61: Why should this particular name, Alpha and Omega (in other words, Beginning and End), make people beware how they take the Lord's name on their lips?

To what does taking the Lord's name on one's lips refer? To cursing? To making covenants and prayers and performing ordinances in his name?

Verses 62–63: Does verse 62 answer the last question? Who might those be within the Church (as verse 63 suggests) who have used the Lord's name without authority? Since this referred to people within the Church when it was given, rather than to people outside the Church, might it mean the same thing today? If so, who might such people in the Church be who use the Lord's name but without authority?

Doctrine and Covenants 76

Verses 25–27: We often picture what happened in the pre-existence as the Son and Lucifer both presenting plans and the Father choosing between them, after which Lucifer rebelled against the Father. But here it says that he “rebelled against the Only Begotten Son whom the Father loved.” What do you make of that? Why did he rebel against the Son rather than against the Father?

The word *perdition* means “utter loss or ruin.” Verse 26 says that Lucifer received that name “for the heavens wept over him.” Why would their weeping result in that name?

What does “the heavens” refer to? What does the weeping of the heavens tell us about the Father's relation to his children?

What does it mean to say that Lucifer (which means “bringer of dawn”) was a son of the morning?

Verses 28–29: The name *Satan* means “accuser.” Why is that the name that scripture uses for Lucifer after his fall? Who does he accuse? To whom does he make his accusations?

The word *devil* comes from the Greek word *diabolos*, meaning “slanderer.” Whom does Satan slander?

How does Satan try to take God’s kingdom? Is that a metaphor, or is it meant literally?

How does Satan make war with the Saints? That is a metaphor, but it is a metaphor with a good deal of reality to it. Where do the battles of this war occur? How are we taught to fight them?

Doctrine and Covenants 97

Verse 8: How would we know that our hearts are honest, broken, and contrite? We are capable of easily lying to ourselves. How do avoid doing so in this case?

Can you say specifically what it means to obey our covenants by sacrifice?

What does it mean to be accepted of the Lord? How can we know that we are accepted?

Doctrine and Covenants 121

Verse 45: To what does the word *bowels* refer in scripture? To figure that out, look up other uses of the term in the Bible and the Book of Mormon. Which ones of them teach us something about how the Lord is using the word? What is the Lord commanding us when he commands us that our bowels be full of charity?

Why does the Lord tell us that we must have charity toward all men and, then, that we should also have charity toward the household of faith? Doesn't the phrase "all men" include the household of faith?

We tend to think of garnish as the parsley a cook adds to the plate to fancy it up a little bit. So to garnish something is to add that little bit of decoration. In that case, we are commanded to decorate our thoughts with charity. But in the early nineteenth century, when this was written, the word *garnish* also meant "to supply; as a fort garnished troops" (Webster's 1828 dictionary). What new meaning does using that older meaning of the word give to this verse?

We often use the word *virtue* to refer to moral cleanliness, particularly to chastity. But it also has a broader meaning: "strength, valor, moral goodness in general, moral excellence." How does using that broader meaning change the meaning of this verse?

What is the doctrine of the priesthood?

What does the metaphor "distil upon thy soul as the dews for heaven" teach us?

Verse 46: What does having the Holy Ghost as our constant companion require according to these verses?

Assuming that "thy scepter" is a metaphor, for what is it a metaphor? Are *scepter* and *dominion* intended to be parallel and, therefore, to mean the same thing? What dominion are we promised?

What does it mean to have a dominion flow to one? What does it mean for it to do so "without compulsory means"?

Doctrine and Covenants 136

Verse 21: What does the commandment “Keep yourselves from evil to take the name of the Lord in vain” mean? The grammar is unusual. Does that unusual grammar cause it to mean something other than what we would expect, namely “Don’t do something evil by taking the name of the Lord in vain”?

Why is the commandment justified or explained by reminding us that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Verse 24: Does drunkenness have anything other than its ordinary meaning? What would it mean for our words to *tend* to edify one another?

Moses 4

Verses 3–4: What could it possibly mean to destroy the agency of human beings? Is it really something that can be taken away? But if it cannot be taken away, then how could Satan have tried to destroy it?

What power did Satan seek to take from the Father?

Does the description of Satan’s work in verse 4 tell us how Satan destroys human agency? Do those who are deceived by Satan have no agency? What does it mean to be captive to the will of Satan?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY

Lesson 44

Matthew 22:21; 1 Timothy 2:1–2;
Doctrine and Covenants 58:21–22, 27; 98:4–6;
134:1–8, 11; Articles of Faith 1:12

Matthew 22

Verse 21: What things belong to “Caesar,” our earthly rulers? What things belong to God? In this injunction, is Jesus saying that we obey God when we obey our rulers, or is he saying, “Go ahead and give Caesar what he demands, but it is more important to give God his due”?

1 Timothy 2

Verses 1–2: The word *therefore* connects this verse to what comes before it. How does the admonition here connect to what is taught in chapter 1?

Is the list “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of things” intended to be a list of four different things or is it intended to be a list that means the same thing as “all kinds of prayers”?

How does Paul explain the need to pray for those with secular authority over us (verse 2)? (Note that the Greek word translated “honesty” in the King James Version is probably better translated “dignity” or “holiness.”)

Doctrine and Covenants 58

Verse 21: Is it a universal truth that if we obey the laws of God we have no need to break the laws of the land? If not, how do you explain this verse? If so, how do you explain the Church's long-lasting opposition to the antipolygamy laws of the nineteenth-century United States?

Verse 22: To whom does "the powers that be" refer? What reason does the Lord give here for why we should obey secular authority? How does that compare with the reason that he gives in 1 Timothy 2:2? Do the two verses give the same reason or complementary ones?

The wording of the last phrase of verse 22 could be read as suggesting that the secular authorities are the enemies of the Lord: be subject to secular authority until the Lord reigns, who will subdue his enemies. Is that a reasonable reading? What are the alternatives?

Verse 27: How is this verse related to the commandment to obey secular authority?

What are examples of things we can and should do on our own? The phrase "bring to pass" most often means "cause." How do we cause righteousness, make it happen?

Doctrine and Covenants 98

Verse 4: By itself this verse is odd: with regard to the laws of the land, do whatever the Lord commands. How are those ideas connected to each other?

Verses 5–6: Does the second clause of this verse (“supporting that principle of freedom”) give us a definition of what it means by “that law of the land which is constitutional”?

What does it mean to say that those laws that are constitutional belong to all people? Specifically, what does it mean to say that a US law that is constitutional belongs to people who are not US citizens?

What does it mean to say that a secular law is justifiable before God?

How do we befriend a law? What do these verses tell us about laws that are not constitutional?

Doctrine and Covenants 134

What circumstances in the Church made this declaration of belief about government necessary? Do we continue to need this declaration in our relations with earthly governments? Does it mean differently for other governments than it meant for the Saints’ relation to the US government in 1835?

Verse 1: What does it mean to say that earthly governments were instituted by God? How did he institute them?

How are we held accountable in our relations with earthly governments?

What kinds of laws does the Lord say we should be making and administering? Can you explain those terms more fully?

Verse 2: The three kinds of law that are mentioned here—free exercise of conscience, right and control of property, and protection of life—are said to all be necessary for a

government to exist in peace. Why would the absence of those laws make peace unlikely?

Is “free exercise of conscience” the same as “freedom of religion”? If not, how do they differ? If so, why did those who wrote this declaration use the former phrase rather than the latter?

What does “right and control of property include”? Does it mean that the government cannot pass laws that affect what an individual does with his or her property? What do you use to justify your answer to the last question? Are there scriptural answers? Do the circumstances at the time this declaration was written tell us? Are there other factors that we have to take into consideration to answer the question?

What does “the protection of life” include? How do you decide what the best answer to that question is? The original intention of the writers of this declaration or what it has come to mean for us over time?

Verse 3: What if a civil officer or magistrate does not “administer the law in equity and justice”? Do we have recourse?

What in this verse lets us know that it was written with more in mind than the relations of the Saints to the US government?

Verse 4: Are we to make anything of the fact that the declaration says that *religion* is instituted by God rather than true religion or something like that? In what sense are all religions instituted by God?

When might a religious practice infringe on the rights and liberties of other people? Would the practice of animal

sacrifice do so? What if most of us were afraid of those of a particular religion? Would that, in itself, mean that they had infringed on our rights and liberties?

Human law has no right “to interfere in prescribing rules of worship to bind the consciences of men.” What does that mean? Since the declaration mentions that human law cannot dictate the forms of our devotion—the ways in which we worship—we must assume this phrase isn’t talking about that. Does it say that human law cannot bind the consciences of men or that human law cannot interfere with a religion’s right to have rules, rules that bind our consciences?

Suppose this tells us that human law doesn’t have the right to bind our consciences. What would it mean to bind them? How might human law do so? Suppose it tells us that human law can’t interfere in a religion’s right to give rules that bind conscience. How could a religion create such a rule? What might be an example?

We often require that criminals express remorse for the crimes they commit. Does doing so go against the precept that we “should restrain crime, but never control conscience”?

Verse 5: We are told here that we must obey and sustain the law, but two escape clauses are given: “while protected in their inherent and inalienable rights” and the fact that this applies to every citizen “thus protected.” Why did the Saints include these escape clauses in their declaration? How do they apply to us today?

The declaration says “all governments have a right to enact such laws as in their own judgments are best calculated to secure the public interest” as long, of course, as they uphold freedom of conscience. How wide is the latitude this gives governments? Does what this verse says contradict anything that has been said earlier? Does it help us understand how we should understand the duties of government stated in verse 2?

Verse 6: What does this verse add that the previous verses have not already said?

Verse 7: This verse says governments are obligated to protect our religious freedom, which the declaration has said at least twice before (verses 2 and 4). But it adds that we have a right to religious freedom “so long as regard and reverence are shown to the laws.” How do we show regard and reverence to the law? What if the law is unjust?

Verse 8: What does “their tendency to evil among men” mean? Should we implicitly add the word *cause*: “their tendency to [cause] evil among men”? Is there a better way of reading the phrase?

How would we go about stepping forward “to use [our] ability in bringing offenders” to punishment? Presumably this verse isn’t recommending vigilante action. But if not, what is it telling us we should do?

Article of Faith 12

How does Doctrine and Covenants 134 flesh this article of faith out? What does that section help us understand that we might not if we had only this article of faith?

Lesson 45

Isaiah 54:13; 1 Nephi 1:1; Mosiah 4:14–15;
Doctrine and Covenants 68:25; 93:40

Isaiah 54

Verse 13: To whom is the Lord speaking in this verse? Does “of the Lord” mean “by the Lord” or “about the Lord”?

What kind of peace do you think the Lord is promising? Does the context of this verse help you answer that question?

1 Nephi 1

Verse 1: What does Nephi specify as the consequence of having goodly parents?

Nephi makes “having been highly favored of the Lord” and “having had a great knowledge of the goodness and mysteries of the Lord” parallel. By doing that, is he telling us that the second of these describes how he was highly favored?

Does the phrase “goodness and mysteries” refer to one thing (as “without form and void” does in Genesis 1:1), or does it refer to two different things? If it refers to one thing, in what sense is God’s goodness a mystery?

Mosiah 4

Verse 14: Does it change the meaning of this verse and the next if we notice that they are part of a series of things

connected by the word *and*? Verse 12 tells us that if we do the things that Mosiah has told us we must, then we will retain a remission of our sins, and something else, and something else, and several other things. He could have put that *if* in front of each of the verses that start with *and* so this verse could be understood to say, “If you do the things that Mosiah has told us of, then we will not allow our children to go hungry,” and so forth. What does *that* mean?

How do we teach our children to walk in the ways of truth and soberness? Is truth and soberness one thing or two? If one, why is the truth described here as sober?

Are “love one another” and “serve one another” intended to mean the same here?

Should we understand the two clauses of this verse, the two pieces on each side of the semicolon that divides the verse into two parts, as saying the same thing? Does this tell us that teaching to walk in ways of truth and soberness is the same as teaching to love and serve?

Doctrine and Covenants 68

Verse 25: Why is the list of what must be taught children so short—just faith, repentance, baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost? What about the rest of the things that we have learned by latter-day revelation?

Doctrine and Covenants 93

Verse 40: Does the preposition *in* tell us anything about what is being commanded here? What does it mean to be brought up *in* truth rather than aware of truth?

Lesson 46

2 Samuel 5:6–7; 1 Kings 8:1; Matthew 5:8;
Hebrews 12:22–23; Doctrine and Covenants 45:66–
67; 50:28; 57:1–2; 82:14–15; 97:21; 100:16; 101:6–8,
17–18; 105:1–12; Moses 7:12–13, 18–19;
Articles of Faith 1:10

Because of the focus of the lesson, I have divided the scriptures for this lesson into two sections, one on the meaning of the word *Zion* and the other on purity of heart.

Scriptures on Zion

2 Samuel 5

Verses 6–7: What does the word *Zion* mean in these verses?

1 Kings 8

Verse 1: Does *Zion* mean the same thing here that it meant in 2 Samuel?

Hebrews 12

Verses 22–23: Does *Zion* mean the same thing here that it means in 2 Samuel and in 1 Kings? Are the mountain of Zion and the city of Jerusalem the same thing, or is there a difference between them?

Doctrine and Covenants 45

Verses 66–67: How does the meaning of the word *Zion* in these verses differ from those we have already seen (if it does)?

Doctrine and Covenants 57

Verses 1–2: Verse 1 describes the land where the elders have gathered as the land appointed for the gathering of the Saints. Verse 2 reminds us that this is what the Lord has promised, so this is “the land of promise,” in other words, the promised land. Is that a meaning of *Zion*?

How does the use of the word *Zion* differ here from other uses we’ve seen? What do those differences teach us?

Doctrine and Covenants 82

Verses 14–15: Does verse 14 use the words *beauty* and *holiness* as synonyms? In what sense is the holy beautiful? Is there a sense in which the beautiful is holy?

Remembering what you have discovered about the meaning of the word *Zion*, what would it mean to enlarge the borders of *Zion*?

By referring to stakes (in other words, the tent stakes) this revelation seems to be comparing *Zion* to Moses’s tabernacle. Does that comparison add any meaning to your understanding of *Zion*?

Just thinking about the metaphor, and not yet about the way we use the word *stakes* today, what would it mean to strengthen the stakes that keep the ropes of the *Zion* tab-

ernacle taut and, by doing so, keep the tent standing? How does a person strengthen a tent stake?

Using the word *stakes* as members of the Church presently use it, how do we strengthen the stakes (plural) of Zion?

Doctrine and Covenants 101

Verse 17: If Zion's children have scattered, then in what sense can there still be a Zion and how can it remain where it was?

Verse 18: If those who remain are pure in heart, does that mean that those who were scattered were not?

The verse tells us that the children of the pure in heart, as well as those pure in heart, will “come to their inheritances.” Why are children mentioned here? Presumably they, too, must be pure in heart. So why mention them? Why not just say that they will build up the waste places rather than that they and their children will?

Which understanding of the word *Zion* must be at work here if Zion can have waste places?

Doctrine and Covenants 105

Verses 1–2: What does it mean for the Church to be redeemed? Redeemed from what? What would it mean to us now if the Church had been redeemed when this revelation was given in 1834?

Verses 3–5: In verse 3, why does the Lord use the specific example of refusing to support the poor and afflicted as his example showing that the Saints were “full of all manner of

evil”? The quoted phrase tells us that there were a variety of ways in which the Saints were evil. So why choose this particular example over other possible ones?

What does *substance* mean in this context? Why use that word rather than property?

Does verse 4 imply that being united as the law of the celestial kingdom requires has something to do with giving of one’s substance to the poor?

When verse 5 refers to “the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom,” is it referring to the law mentioned in verse 4?

How will God receive Zion? Does the phrase “to myself” add something to what verse 5 means?

Verses 6–8: How were the people of the Church being chastened at the time this revelation was given?

How can suffering teach us obedience?

In verse 8, who is asking about the God of Israel and threatening to keep their money?

Verses 9–10: What will have to wait for a little season? Is there any clue in these verses how long “a little season” will be?

Verse 10 tells us what must happen during this little season: we must be taught better, have experience, and know our duty better as well as the things that the Lord requires. If the Saints hadn’t already been taught, then why do they need the chastening of this time period rather than good teaching? What kind of experience does the Lord want them to have? What is the difference between knowing our duty and knowing what the Lord requires of us, or is there a difference?

Verse 11: What endowment of power were the elders waiting for when this revelation was received? How would that power help solve the problems listed in verse 10?

Verse 12: Is the endowment and blessing referred to here the same as that referred to in verse 11?

Moses 7

Verses 12–13: What do you make of the fact that these verses make the power of Enoch to preach the gospel and the power to bring miracles about parallel to each other?

Why is language so important in both cases? Does that say anything to us about our own relationship to language? If so, what?

Verses 18–19: Compare and contrast the use of the word *Zion* in these verses to its use in other places. Do the similarities with other places where we've seen the word used help us understand better why the Lord called these people *Zion*?

The Lord speaks of living righteously and then uses the absence of poor as the example of righteousness. (This is the inverse of what he does in D&C 105:3.) Why do you think he chose that particular example to illustrate what righteousness is?

How is our support of the poor and afflicted emblematic of God's relationship with us?

Given what you've seen the word *Zion* mean in other scriptures, how can it mean "holiness" here?

Article of Faith 10

Why is it important to believe in the *literal* gathering of Israel?

Here Zion is identified with “the New Jerusalem.” In what sense is this new city a new Jerusalem rather than just a new city?

When will Christ reign on this earth?

What glory did the earth have when paradise was on it?
Was it anything more than the glory of having paradise?

Scriptures on Purity of Heart

Matthew 5

Verse 8: This verse repeats an old idea. (See Psalm 73:1, for example.) Some have described purity of heart as single-mindedness, a heart set on doing one thing, the will of God. Others have said that it is the same as purity of conscience. Still others have identified it with complete integrity. What do you think purity of heart means, and why?

What does it mean to see God? Does that have any meanings in addition to the most obvious ones?

Doctrine and Covenants 50

Verse 28: What does it mean to possess all things? When we think about ordinary instances of possession, if I possess something, then another person cannot. But we are all promised that we can possess all things. How

would that be possible? Can we think of another way to understand what possession means?

Is being purified from sin the same thing as having a pure heart? Why or why not?

Doctrine and Covenants 97

Verse 21: The Lord repeats twice, “Let Zion rejoice.” Why should what he tells us in this verse, that Zion is the pure in heart, cause us to rejoice? Why should the rest of the world mourn at this news?

Which uses of the word *Zion* seem to be most relevant to understanding Zion as the pure in heart?

Doctrine and Covenants 100

Verse 16: Does this verse give us another definition of purity of heart, namely serving God righteously?

Doctrine and Covenants 101

Verse 6: Of whom is this verse speaking?

What inheritance is this verse referring to? What are jar-rings? How do they, with contention, envying, strife, and lustful and covetous desires pollute an inheritance?

Verse 7: What does it mean to be slow to listen to someone?

Verse 8: What does the metaphor of feeling after God suggest?

THE DOCTRINE & COVENANTS MADE HARDER: SCRIPTURE STUDY